AN

ESSAY

ON THE

NATURE and IMMUTABILITY

OF

TRUTH;

IN OPPOSITION TO

SOPHISTRY and SCEPTICISM.

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BRITISH MUSEUM
30 JUL 83

AN ESSAY ON THE NATURE and IMMUTABILITY OF TRUTH; IN OPPOSITION TO SOPHISTRY and SCEPTICISM.

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Nunquam aliud Natura, aliud Sapientia dicit.
JUVENAL.

EDINBURGH:
Printed for A. KINCAID & J. BELL.
Sold, at London, by E. & C. DILLY, in the Poultry.
MDCCLXX.

BRITISH MUSEUM
30
53
JUL

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INTRODUCTION.

TO thoſe who wiſh well to the intereſts of learning and mankind, and who are more ambitious to diſtinguiſh themſelves as men, than as diſputants, it is matter of humiliation and regret, that names and things have ſo oft been miſtaken for each other; that ſo much of the philoſopher's time muſt be employed in aſcertaining the ſignification of words; and that ſo many doctrines, of high reputation, and of ancient date, when traced to their firſt principles, have been found to terminate in verbal ambiguity. If I have any knowledge of my own heart, or of the ſubject I propoſe to examine, I may venture to aſſure the reader, that it is no part of the deſign of this book, to encourage verbal diſputation. On the contrary, it is my ſincere purpoſe to avoid it, and to do every thing in my power to check it; convinced as I am, that it never can do any good, and that it has been the cauſe of much miſchief, both in philoſophy and in common life. And I hope I have a fairer chance to eſcape it, than

ſome who have gone before me in this part of ſcience. I aim at no paradoxes; my prejudices (if certain inſtinctive ſuggeſtions of the underſtanding may be ſo called) are all in favour of truth and virtue; and I have no principles to ſupport, but thoſe which ſeem to me to have influenced the judgements of a great majority of mankind in all ages of the world.

Many will think, that there is but little merit in this declaration; it being as much for my own credit, as for the intereſt of mankind, that I guard againſt a practice, which is acknowledged to be in every reſpect unprofitable, and in ſome reſpects pernicious. A verbal diſputant! what claim can he have to the title of Philoſopher! what has he to do with the laws of nature, with the obſervation of facts, with life and manners! Let him not intrude upon the company of men of ſcience; but repoſe with his brethren Aquinas and Suarez, in the corner of ſome Gothic cloiſter, dark as his underſtanding, and cold as his heart. Men are now become too judicious to be amuſed with words, and too *firm-minded* to be confuted with quibbles. — Many of my contemporaries would readily

readily join in this apoſtrophe, who yet are themſelves the dupes of ſome of the moſt egregious dealers in logomachy that ever perverted the faculty of ſpeech. In fact, from ſome inſtances that have occurred to my own obſervation, I have reaſon to believe, that verbal controverſy hath not always, even in this age, been accounted a contemptible thing: and the reader, when he comes to be better acquainted with my ſentiments, will perhaps think the foregoing declaration more diſintereſted, than at firſt ſight it may appear.

They who form opinions concerning the manners and principles of the times, may be divided into three claſſes. Some will tell us, that the preſent age tranſcends all that have gone before it, in politeneſs, learning, and good ſenſe; will thank Providence (or their ſtars) that their lot of life has been caſt in ſo glorious a period; and wonder how men could poſſibly ſupport exiſtence amidſt the ignorance and barbariſm of former days. By others we are accounted a generation of triflers and profligates, ſcioliſts in learning, hypocrites in virtue, and formaliſts

in good-breeding; wiſe only when we follow the ancients, and fooliſh whenever we deviate from their footſteps. Such violent ſentiments are generally wrong: and therefore I am diſpoſed to adopt the notions of thoſe who may be conſidered as forming an intermediate claſs; who, tho' not blind to the follies, are yet willing to acknowledge the virtues, both of paſt ages, and of the preſent. And ſurely, in every age, and in every man, there is ſomething to praiſe, as well as ſomething to blame.

When I ſurvey the philoſophy of the preſent age, I find much matter of applauſe and admiration. Mathematics, Natural Philoſophy, and Natural Hiſtory, in all their branches, have riſen to a pitch of perfection, which doth ſignal honour to human reaſon, and far ſurpaſſeth what the moſt ſanguine of former times could have expected: and the paths to further improvement in thoſe ſciences are ſo clearly marked out, that nothing but honeſty and attention ſeems neceſſary to enſure the ſucceſs of future adventurers. Moral Philoſophy and Logic have not been ſo fortunate: yet, even here, we have happily got rid

rid of much pedantry and jargon; our ſyſtems have more the appearance of liberal ſentiment, good taſte, and correct compoſition, than thoſe of the ſchoolmen; we diſclaim (at leaſt in words) all attachment to hypotheſis and party; profeſs to ſtudy men and things, as well as books and words; and aſſert, with the utmoſt vehemence of proteſtation, our love of truth, of candour, and of ſound philoſophy. But let us not be deceived by appearances. Neither Moral Philoſophy, nor the kindred ſciences of Logic and Criticiſm, are at preſent upon the moſt deſirable footing. The rage of paradox and ſyſtem hath tranſformed them (although of all ſciences theſe ought to be the ſimpleſt and the cleareſt) into a maſs of confuſion, darkneſs, and abſurdity. One kind of jargon is laid aſide; but another has been adopted, equally frivolous, though more faſhionable. Hypotheſis, though verbally diſclaimed, is really adhered to with as much obſtinacy as ever. Words have been defined; but their ambiguity continues. Appeals have been made to experience; but with ſuch miſrepreſentation and equivocation, as plainly ſhow the authors to have

have been more concerned for their theory, than for the truth. All ſciences, and eſpecially Moral Philoſophy, ought to regulate human practice: practice is regulated by principles, and all principles ſuppoſe conviction: yet the aim of our moſt celebrated moral ſyſtems is, to diveſt the mind of every principle, and of all conviction; and, conſequently, to diſqualify man for action, and to render him as uſeleſs, and as wretched, as poſſible. In a word, SCEPTICISM is now the profeſſion of every faſhionable inquirer into human nature; a ſcepticiſm which is not confined to points of mere ſpeculation, but hath been extended to practical truths of the higheſt importance, even to the principles of morality and religion. Proofs of all theſe aſſertions will appear in the ſequel.

I ſaid, that my prejudices are all in favour of truth and virtue. To avow any ſort of prejudice, may perhaps ſtartle ſome readers. If it ſhould, I muſt here intreat all ſuch to pauſe a moment, and aſk of their own hearts theſe ſimple queſtions. Are virtue and truth uſeful to mankind? Are they matters of indifference? Or are they pernicious? If any one finds himſelf

ſelf diſpoſed to think them pernicious, or matters of indifference, I would adviſe him to lay my book aſide; for it doth not contain one ſentiment in which he can be intereſted, nor one expreſſion with which he can be pleaſed. But he who believes, that virtue and truth are of the higheſt importance, that in them is laid the foundation of human happineſs, and that on them depends the very exiſtence of human ſociety, and of human creatures,—that perſon and I are of the ſame mind; I have no prejudices which he would wiſh me not to have: he may proceed; and I hope he will proceed with pleaſure, and encourage, with his approbation, this honeſt attempt to vindicate truth and virtue; and to overturn that pretended philoſophy, which ſuppoſeth, or which may lead us to ſuppoſe, every dictate of conſcience, and every impulſe of underſtanding, queſtionable and ambiguous.

This ſceptical philoſophy (as it is called) ſeems to me to be dangerous, not becauſe it is ingenious, but becauſe it is ſubtle and obſcure. Were it rightly underſtood, no confutation of it would be neceſſary; for it does in fact confute itſelf,

ſelf, as I hope to demonſtrate. But many, to my certain knowledge, have read it, and admitted its tenets, who do not underſtand the grounds of them; and many more, ſwayed by the faſhion of the times, have greedily adopted its concluſions, without any knowledge whatſoever of the premiſes, or any concern about them. An attempt therefore to expoſe this pretended philoſophy to public view, in its proper colours, will not, I hope, be cenſured as impertinent by any whoſe opinion I value: if it ſhould, I ſhall be ſatisfied with the approbation of my own conſcience, which will never reproach me for intending to do good.

I am ſorry, that in the courſe of this inquiry, it will not always be in my power to ſpeak of ſome celebrated names with that deference, to which ſuperior talents, and ſuperior virtue, are always entitled. Every friend to civil and religious liberty, every lover of mankind, every admirer of ſincerity, and ſimplicity of manners, every heart that warms at the recollection of diſtinguiſhed virtue, muſt conſider Mr LOCKE as one of the moſt amiable, and moſt illuſtrious men, that ever our

nation

nation produced. Such he is, and ſuch he always will be, in my eſtimation. The parts of his philoſophy to which truth obliges me to object, are but few, and, compared with the extent and importance of his other writings, extremely inconſiderable. I object to them, becauſe I think them erroneous and dangerous; and I am convinced, that their author, if he had lived to ſee the inferences that have been drawn from them, would have been the firſt to declare them abſurd, and would have expunged them from his works with indignation. Dr BERKELEY was equally amiable in his life, and equally a friend to truth and virtue. In elegance of compoſition he was perhaps ſuperior. I admire his virtues: I can never ſufficiently applaud his zeal in the cauſe of religion: but ſome of his reaſonings on the ſubject of human nature I cannot admit, without renouncing my claim to rationality. There is a Writer now alive, of whoſe philoſophy I have much to ſay. By his philoſophy, I mean the ſentiments he hath publiſhed in a book called, *A Treatiſe of Human Nature*, in three volumes, printed in the year 1739; the principal doctrines of which he

hath ſince republiſhed again and again, under the title of, *Eſſays Moral and Political*, &c. Of his other works I ſay nothing; nor have I at preſent any concern with them. Virgil is ſaid to have been a bad proſe-writer *; Cicero was certainly a bad poet: and this author, though not much acquainted with human nature, and therefore not well qualified to write a treatiſe upon it, may yet be an excellent politician, financier, and hiſtorian. His high merit in theſe three reſpects is indeed univerſally allowed: and if my ſuffrage could add any thing to the luſtre of ſuch diſtinguiſhed reputation, I ſhould here, with great ſincerity and pleaſure, join my voice to that of the public, and make ſuch an encomium on the author of *the Hiſtory of England* as would not offend any of his rational admirers. But why is this author's character ſo replete with inconſiſtency! why ſhould his principles and his talents extort at once our eſteem and deteſtation, our applauſe and contempt! That he, whoſe manners in private life are ſo agreeable, ſhould yet, in the public ca-

* Seneca, Controv. lib. 3.

pacity

pacity of an author, have given ſo much cauſe of juſt offence to all who love virtue and mankind, is to me matter of aſtoniſhment and ſorrow, as well as of indignation. That he, who ſucceeds ſo well in deſcribing the fates of nations, ſhould yet have failed ſo egregiouſly in explaining the operations of the mind, is one of thoſe incongruities in human genius, for which perhaps philoſophy will never be able fully to account. That he, who ſo impartially hath ſtated the oppoſite pleas and principles of our political factions, ſhould yet have adopted the moſt illiberal prejudices againſt natural and revealed religion; that he, who on ſome occaſions hath diſplayed even a profound erudition, ſhould at other times, when intoxicated with a favourite theory, have ſuffered affirmations to eſcape him, which would have fixed the opprobrious name of Scioliſt on a leſs celebrated author; and, finally, that a moral philoſopher, who ſeems to have exerted his utmoſt ingenuity in ſearching after paradoxes, ſhould yet happen to light on none, but ſuch as are all, without exception, on the ſide of licentiouſneſs and ſcepticiſm: theſe are in-

conſiſtencies perhaps equally inexplicable; at leaſt they are ſuch as I do not at preſent chuſe to explain. And yet, that this author is chargeable with all theſe inconſiſtencies, will not, I think, be denied by any perſon of ſenſe and candour, who hath read his works with attention. His philoſophy hath done great harm. Its admirers, I know, are very numerous; but I have not as yet met with one perſon, who both admired and underſtood it. We are prone to believe what we wiſh to be true: and moſt of this author's philoſophical tenets are ſo well adapted to what I fear I may call the faſhionable notions of the times, that thoſe who are ambitious to conform themſelves to the latter will hardly be diſpoſed to examine ſcrupulouſly the evidence of the former. —— Having made this declaration, which I do in the ſpirit of an honeſt man, I muſt take the liberty to treat this author with that plainneſs, which the cauſe of truth, the intereſts of ſociety, and my own conſcience, require. The ſame candour that prompts me to praiſe, will alſo oblige me to blame. The inconſiſtency is not in me, but in him. Had I done but half as much

as

as he, in labouring to ſubvert principles which ought ever to be held ſacred, I know not whether the friends of truth would have granted me any indulgence; I am ſure they ought not. Let me be treated with the lenity due to a good citizen, no longer than I act as becomes one.

If it ſhall be acknowledged by the candid and intelligent reader, that I have in this book contributed ſomething to the eſtabliſhment of old truths, I ſhall not be much offended, though others ſhould pretend to diſcover, that I have advanced nothing new. Indeed I would not wiſh to ſay any thing on theſe ſubjects, that hath not often occurred to the common ſenſe of mankind. In Logic and Morals, we may have new treatiſes, and new theories; but we are not now to expect new diſcoveries. The principles of moral duty have long been underſtood in theſe enlightened parts of the world; and mankind, in the time that is paſt, have had more truth under their conſideration, than they will probably have in the time to come. Yet he who makes theſe ſciences the ſtudy of his life, may perhaps collect particulars

particulars concerning their evidence, which, though known to a few, are unknown to many; may ſet ſome objects in a more ſtriking light, than that in which they have been formerly viewed; may deviſe methods of confuting new errors, and expoſing new paradoxes; and may hit upon a more popular way of expreſſing what has hitherto been exhibited in too dark and myſterious a form.

It is commonly acknowledged, that the ſcience of human nature is of all human ſciences the moſt curious and important. To know ourſelves, is a precept which the wiſe in all ages have recommended, and which is enjoined by the authority of revelation itſelf. Can any thing be of more conſequence to man, than to know what is his duty, and how he may arrive at happineſs? It is from the examination of his own heart that he receives the firſt intimations of the one, and the only ſure criterion of the other.—What can be more uſeful, more delightful, and more ſublime, than to contemplate the Deity? It is in the works of nature, particularly in the conſtitution of the human ſoul, that we diſcern the firſt and moſt conſpicuous traces

traces of the Almighty: for without ſome previous acquaintance with our own moral nature, we could not poſſibly have any certain knowledge of His.—Deſtitute of the hope of immortality, and a future retribution, how contemptible, how miſerable is man! And yet, did not our moral feelings, in concert with what our reaſon diſcovers of the Deity, evidence the neceſſity of a future ſtate, in vain ſhould we pretend to judge rationally of that revelation by which life and immortality have been brought to light.

How then is this ſcience to be learned? In what manner are we to ſtudy human nature? Doubtleſs by examining our own hearts and feelings, and by attending to the conduct of other men. But are not the writings of philoſophers uſeful towards the attainment of this ſcience? Moſt certainly they are: for whatever improves the ſagacity of judgement, the ſenſibility of moral perception, or the delicacy of taſte; whatever renders our knowledge of moral and intellectual facts more extenſive; whatever impreſſeth us with ſtronger and more enlarged ſentiments of duty, with more affecting views of God and Providence,

dence, and with greater energy of belief in the doctrines of natural religion; — every thing of this ſort either makes us more thoroughly acquainted, or prepares us for becoming more thoroughly acquainted, with our own nature, with the nature of other beings, and with the relations which they and we bear to one another. But I fear we ſhall not be able to improve ourſelves in any one of theſe reſpects, by reading the modern ſyſtems of ſcepticiſm. What account then are we to make of thoſe ſyſtems, and their authors? The following diſſertation is partly deſigned as an anſwer to this queſtion. But it has a further view. It propoſes to examine the foundations of this ſcepticiſm, and to ſee whether theſe be conſiſtent with what all mankind muſt acknowledge to be the foundations of truth; to inquire whether the cultivation of ſcepticiſm be ſalutary or pernicious to ſcience and mankind; and whether it may not be poſſible to deviſe certain *criteria*, by which the abſurdity of its concluſions may be detected, even by thoſe who may not have leiſure, or ſubtlety, or metaphyſical knowledge, ſufficient to qualify them for a logical confutation of all

all its premiſes. If it be confeſſed, that the preſent age hath ſome tendency to licentiouſneſs, both in principle and practice, and that the works of ſceptical writers have ſome tendency to favour that licentiouſneſs; it will alſo be confeſſed, that this deſign is neither abſurd nor unſeaſonable.

A celebrated writer * on human nature hath obſerved, that "if truth be at all "within the reach of human capacity, it "is certain it muſt lie very deep and ab-"ſtruſe:" and a little after he adds, "that "he would eſteem it a ſtrong preſump-"tion againſt the philoſophy he is going "to unfold, were it ſo very eaſy and ob-"vious." I am ſo far from adopting this opinion, that I declare, in regard to the few things I have to ſay on human nature, that I ſhould eſteem it a very ſtrong preſumption againſt them, if they were not eaſy and obvious. Phyſical and mathematical truths are often exceedingly abſtruſe; but facts and experiments relating to the human mind, when expreſſed in proper words, ought to be obvious to

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 3. 4.

all. I find, that thoſe poets, hiſtorians, and noveliſts, who have given the moſt lively diſplays of human nature, and who abound moſt in ſentiments eaſily comprehended, and readily admitted as true, are the moſt entertaining, as well as the moſt uſeful. How then ſhould the philoſophy of the human mind be ſo difficult and obſcure? Indeed, if it be an author's determined purpoſe to advance paradoxes, ſome of which are incredible, and others incomprehenſible; if he be willing to avail himſelf all he can of the natural ambiguity of language in ſupporting thoſe paradoxes; or if he enter upon inquiries too refined for human underſtanding; he muſt often be obſcure, and often unintelligible. But my views are very different. I only intend to ſuggeſt ſome hints for guarding the mind againſt error; and theſe, I hope, will be found to be deduced from principles which every man of common capacity may examine by his daily experience.

It is true, that ſeveral ſubjects of intricate ſpeculation are examined in this book: but I have endeavoured, by conſtant appeals to fact and experience, by illuſtrations

illuſtrations and examples the moſt familiar I could think of, and by a plainneſs and perſpicuity of expreſſion which ſometimes may appear too much affected, to examine them in ſuch a way, as I hope cannot fail to render them intelligible, even to thoſe who are not much converſant in ſtudies of this kind. Truth, like virtue, to be loved, needs only to be ſeen. My principles require no diſguiſe; on the contrary, they will, if I miſtake not, be moſt eaſily admitted by thoſe who beſt underſtand them. And I am perſuaded, that the ſceptical ſyſtem would never have made ſuch an alarming progreſs, if it had been well underſtood. The ambiguity of its language, and the intricacy and length of ſome of its fundamental inveſtigations, have unhappily been too ſucceſsful in producing that confuſion of ideas, and indiſtinctneſs of apprehenſion, in the minds both of authors and readers, which are ſo favourable to error and ſophiſtry.

Few men have ever engaged in controverſy, religious, political, or philoſophical, without being in ſome degree chargeable with miſapprehenſion of the adverſa-

ry's meaning. That I have never erred in this way, I dare not affirm. But I am conſcious of having done every thing in my power to guard againſt it. The greater part of theſe papers have lain by me for ſeveral years; they have been repeatedly peruſed by ſome of the acuteſt philoſophers of the age, whom I have the honour to call my friends, and to whoſe advice and aſſiſtance, on this, as on other occaſions, I am deeply indebted. I have availed myſelf all I could of reading and converſation; and endeavoured, with all the candour I am maſter of, to profit by every hint of improvement, and to examine to the bottom every objection, which others have offered, or myſelf could deviſe. And may I not be permitted to add, that every one of thoſe who have peruſed this eſſay, has adviſed the author to publiſh it; and that many of them have encouraged him by this inſinuation, to him the moſt flattering of all others, That by ſo doing, he would probably be of ſome ſervice to the cauſe of truth, virtue, and mankind? In this hope he ſubmits it to the public. And it is this hope only that could have induced him to attempt polemical

mical diſquiſition: a ſpecies of writing, which, in his own judgement, is not the moſt creditable; which he knows, to his coſt, is not the moſt pleaſing; and of which he is well aware, that it can hardly fail to draw upon him the reſentment of a numerous and very faſhionable party. But,

Welcome for thee, fair Virtue! all the paſt;
For thee, fair Virtue! welcome even the laſt.

If theſe pages, which he hopes none will condemn who have not read, ſhall throw any light on the firſt principles of moral ſcience; if they ſhall ſuggeſt, to the young and unwary, any cautions againſt that ſophiſtry, and licentiouſneſs of principle, which too much infect the converſations and compoſitions of the age; if they ſhall, in any meaſure, contribute to the ſatisfaction of any of the friends of truth and virtue; his purpoſe will be completely anſwered: and he will, to the end of his life, rejoice in the recollection of thoſe painful hours which he paſſed in the examination of this moſt important controverſy.

AN

AN ESSAY ON THE NATURE and IMMUTABILITY OF TRUTH, IN OPPOSITION TO SOPHISTRY and SCEPTICISM.

I PROPOSE to treat this ſubject in the following manner.

FIRST, I ſhall endeavour to trace the ſeveral kinds of Evidence and Reaſoning up to their firſt principles; with a view to aſcertain the Standard of truth, and explain its immutability.

SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, I ſhall ſhow, that my ſentiments on this head, however inconſiſtent with the genius of ſcepticiſm, and with the practice and principles of ſceptical writers, are yet perfectly conſiſtent with the genius of true philoſophy, and with the practice and principles of thoſe whom all acknowledge to have been the moſt ſucceſsful in the inveſtigation of truth: concluding with ſome inferences or rules, by which the more important fallacies of the ſceptical philoſophy may be detected by every perſon of common ſenſe, even though he ſhould not poſſeſs acuteneſs or metaphyſical knowledge ſufficient to qualify him for a logical confutation of them.

THIRDLY, I ſhall anſwer ſome objections; and make ſome remarks, by way of Eſtimate of ſcepticiſm and ſceptical writers.

I divide my diſcourſe in this manner, chiefly with a view to the reader's accommodation. An exact arrangement of parts is neceſſary to confer elegance on a whole; but I am more ſtudious of utility than of elegance. And though my ſentiments might have been exhibited in a more

more ſyſtematic order, I am apt to think, that the order in which they firſt occurred to me is the moſt natural, and may be the moſt effectual for accompliſhing my purpoſe.

PART I.

Of the Standard of Truth.

THE love of truth has ever been accounted a good principle. Where it is known to prevail, we expect to find integrity and ſteadineſs; a temper of mind favourable to every virtue, and tending in an eminent degree to the advancement of public utility. To have no concern for the truth, to be falſe and fallacious, is a character which no perſon who is not utterly abandoned would chuſe to bear; it is a character from which we expect nothing but levity and inconſiſtence. Truth ſeems to be conſidered by all mankind as ſomething fixed, unchangeable, and eternal; it may therefore be thought, that to vindicate the permanency of truth is really to diſpute without an adverſary. And indeed, if theſe queſtions were propoſed in general terms,—Is there ſuch a thing as truth? Are truth and

and falſehood different and oppoſite? Is truth permanent and eternal?—few perſons would be hardy enough to anſwer in the negative. Attempts, however, have been made, ſometimes through inadvertence, rarely (I hope) from deſign, to undermine the foundations of truth, and to render their ſtability queſtionable; and theſe attempts have been ſo vigorouſly forwarded, and ſo often renewed, that they now conſtitute a conſiderable part of what is called *the philoſophy of the human mind.*

It is difficult, perhaps impoſſible, to give a logical definition of Truth. But we muſt try to give ſuch a deſcription of it, as may make others underſtand what we mean by the word. The definitions of former writers are not ſo clear, nor ſo unexceptionable, as could be wiſhed. Theſe therefore we ſhall overlook, without ſeeking either to explain or to correct them; and ſhall ſatisfy ourſelves with taking notice of ſome of the mental phenomena that attend the perception of truth. This ſeems to be the ſafeſt way of introducing the ſubject.

CHAPTER I.

Of the perception of Truth in general.

ON hearing theſe propoſitions,—I exiſt, Things equal to one and the ſame thing are equal to one another, The ſun roſe to-day, There is a God, Ingratitude ought to be blamed and puniſhed, The three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, &c.—I am conſcious, that my mind readily admits and acquieſces in them. I ſay, that I believe them to be true; that is, I conceive theſe propoſitions to expreſs ſomething conformable to the nature of things *. Of the contrary propoſitions I ſhould ſay, that my mind doth not acquieſce in them, but diſbelieves them, and conceives them to expreſs ſomething not conformable to the nature of things. My judgement in this caſe, I conceive to be the ſame which I ſhould form in regard to theſe propoſitions, if I

* —ἀεὶ δ' ἑκαστον ὡς ἔχει τυ εἶναι, οὕτω καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας.
Ariſtot. Metaph. lib. 2. cap. 1.

were

were perfectly acquainted with all nature, in all its parts, and in all its laws.

If I be aſked, what I mean by *the nature of things*, I cannot otherwiſe explain myſelf, than by ſaying, that there is in my mind ſomething which induces me to think, that every thing exiſting in nature, is determined to exiſt, and to exiſt after a certain manner, in conſequence of eſtabliſhed laws; and that whatever is agreeable to thoſe laws is agreeable to the nature of things, becauſe by thoſe laws the nature of all things is determined. Of thoſe laws I do not pretend to know any thing, except ſo far as they ſeem to be intimated to me by my own feelings, and by the ſuggeſtions of my own underſtanding. But theſe feelings and ſuggeſtions are ſuch, and affect me in ſuch a manner, that I cannot help receiving them, and truſting in them, and believing that their intimations are not fallacious, but ſuch as I ſhould approve if I were perfectly acquainted with every thing in the univerſe, and ſuch as I may approve, and admit of, and regulate my conduct by, without danger of any inconvenience.

It is not eaſy on this ſubject to avoid identical expreſſions. I am not certain that I have been able to avoid them. And perhaps I might have expreſſed my thoughts more ſhortly and more clearly, by ſaying, that I account That to be *truth* which the conſtitution of my nature determines me to believe, and That to be *falſehood* which the conſtitution of my nature determines me to diſbelieve. Believing and diſbelieving are ſimple acts of the mind; I can neither define nor deſcribe them in words; and therefore the reader muſt judge of their nature from his own experience. We often believe what we afterwards find to be falſe; but while belief continues, we think it true; when we diſcover its falſity, we believe it no longer.

Hitherto we have uſed the word *belief* to denote that act of the mind which attends the perception of truth in general. But truths are of different kinds; ſome are certain, others only probable; and we ought not to call that act of the mind which attends the perception of certainty, and that which attends the perception of probability, by one and the ſame name.

Some

Some have called the former *conviction*, and the latter *aſſent*. All convictions are equally ſtrong; but aſſent admits of innumerable degrees, from moral certainty, which is the higheſt degree, down to abſolute doubting.

We may, without abſurdity, ſpeak of probable truth, as well as of certain truth. Whatever a rational being is determined, by the conſtitution of his nature, to admit as probable, may be called *probable truth*; the acknowledgement of it is as univerſal as rational nature, and will be as permanent. But, in this inquiry, we propoſe to confine ourſelves chiefly to that kind of truth which may be called certain, which enforceth our *conviction*; and the belief of which, in a ſound mind, is not tinctured with any doubt or uncertainty.

The inveſtigation and perception of truth is commonly aſcribed to our rational faculties: and theſe have by ſome been reduced to two; Reaſon, and Judgement; the former being ſuppoſed to be converſant about certain truths, the latter chiefly about probabilities. But certain truths are not all of the ſame kind; ſome being ſupported by one ſort of evidence, and others

thers by another: different energies of the underſtanding muſt therefore be exerted in perceiving them; and theſe different energies muſt be expreſſed by different names, if we would ſpeak of them diſtinctly and intelligibly. The certainty of ſome truths, for inſtance, is perceived intuitively; the certainty of others is perceived, not intuitively, but in conſequence of a proof. Moſt of the propoſitions of Euclid are of the latter kind; the axioms of geometry are of the former. Now, if that faculty by which we perceive truth in conſequence of a proof, be called *Reaſon*, ſurely that power by which we perceive ſelf-evident truth, ought to be diſtinguiſhed by a different name. Some philoſophers of eminence * have given it the name of *Common Senſe*; and as the term ſeems not improper, we ſhall adopt it. But in a ſubject of this kind, there is great danger of our being impoſed upon by words; we cannot therefore be too much upon our guard againſt that ſpecies of illuſion. We propoſe to draw ſome important inferences from this doctrine of the

* Buffier, Dr Reid, &c.

diſtinction

diſtinction between Reaſon and Common Senſe; but theſe words are not always uſed in the ſtrict ſignification we have here aſſigned them: let us therefore take a view of all the ſenſes in which they are commonly uſed, and let us explain more particularly that ſenſe in which we propoſe to uſe them; and thus we ſhall take every method in our power to ſecure ourſelves againſt the impropriety of confounding our ideas by the uſe of ambiguous and indefinite expreſſions. Theſe philological diſcuſſions are indeed no part of philoſophy; but they are very neceſſary to prepare us for it. "Qui ad interpretan-
" dam naturam acceſſerit," ſays Lord Verulam, "verborum mixtam naturam, et
" juvamenti et nocumenti imprimis parti-
" cipem, diſtincte ſciat *."

This diſtinction between Common Senſe and Reaſon is no modern diſcovery †. The

* De Interpretatione Naturæ, ſent. 9.

† The κοινονημοσυνη of the Greek Stoics ſeems to mean that benevolent affection which men owe to ſociety and to one another. Some of the modern moraliſts have called it the *Public Senſe*. But the notion or idea we mean to expreſs by the term *Common Senſe* is quite different The *Senſus Communis* of the Latins hath ſeveral ſignifications.

The ancient geometricians were all acquainted with it. Ariſtotle treats of ſelf-evident principles in many parts of his works, particularly in the fourth book of his Metaphyſics, and in the firſt book of his latter Analytics. He calls them, *Axioms* or *Dignities*, *Principles*, and *Common Sentiments* *; and ſays of them, "That

1. It denotes this *Public Senſe*, or κοινονημοσυνη. *See Shafteſbury's Eſſay on the freedom of wit and humour, part* 3. *ſect.* 1. *Note.* 2. It denotes that experience and knowledge of life which is acquired by living in ſociety. Thus Quintilian, ſpeaking of the advantages of a public education: "Senſum ipſum qui communis dicitur, ubi "diſcet, cum ſe a congreſſu, qui non hominibus ſolum, ſed "mutis quoque animalibus naturalis eſt, ſegregarit?" *lib.* 1. *cap.* 2. 3. It ſeems to ſignify that inſtinctive perſuaſion of truth which ariſes from intuitive evidence, and is the foundation of all reaſoning:

"Corpus enim per ſe communis deliquat eſſe
"Senſus; quo niſi prima fides fundata valebit,
"Haud erit occultis de rebus quo referentes
"Confirmare animi quicquam ratione queamus."

Lucretius, lib. 1. *ver.* 423.

And in the ſame ſenſe the Greeks often uſe the terms κοινος λογος, κοινη αισθησις, &c.

* Αξιωματα, Αρχαι, Κοιναι δοξαι — Λεγω δε αποδεικτικας, και τας κοινας δοξας, εξ ων απαντες δεικνυσι· οιον, ὁτι παν αναγκαιον ἡ φαναι, ἡ αποφαναι· και αδυναιον αμα ειναι και μη ειναι.

Metaphyſ. lib. 3. *cap.* 2.

"they

" they are known by their own evi-
" dence *; that except ſome firſt prin-
" ciples be taken for granted, there can
" be neither reaſon nor reaſoning †; that
" it is impoſſible that every truth ſhould

* *Analytic. lib. 2. cap. 16.* —— Of theſe firſt principles, a French Peripatetic, who wrote about the beginning of the laſt century, expreſſeth himſelf thus: " Ces
" principes portent le nom de communs, non ſeulement
" parce qu'ils ſervent à pluſieurs ſciences, mais auſſi
" parce que *l'intelligence en eſt commune à tous.* On les
" appelle auſſi *dignitez*, et *notions communes:* à ſçavoir,
" dignitez, quaſi comme dignes entre toutes les autres
" qu'on y adiouſte foy, à cauſe de la grande excellence
" de leur clarté et evidence; et notions communes, pour
" ce qu'ils ſont ſi connus, qu'auſſi-toſt que la ſignifica-
" tion des termes dont ils ſont compoſez eſt entenduë,
" ſans diſcourir ny argumenter davantage deſſus, chacun
" entend naturellement leur verité; ſi ce n'eſt quelque
" hebeté privé de raiſon; lequel je renvoye à Ariſtote,
" qui prononce, que ceux qui doutent, qu'il faut reverer
" les Dieux, ou aymer les parents, meritent d'eſtre pu-
" nis; et que ceux qui doutent que la nege eſt blanche
" ont beſoin de ſens: et à Averroes, qui dit, que ceux
" qui ne ſçauroient diſtinguer ce qui eſt connu par ſoy
" d'avec ce qui ne l'eſt pas, ſont incapables de philoſo-
" pher; et que ne pouvoir connoiſtre ces principes, pro-
" cede de quelque defaut de nature, ou de peu d'exer-
" cice, ou d'une mauvaiſe accouſtumance enracinée."
Corps de toute la Philoſophie de Theophraſte Bouju, p. 79.

† Μηδεν γαρ τιθεντες, ἀναιρουσι το διαλεγεσθαι, και ὁλως λογον.
Ariſtot. Metaphſ. lib. 2. cap. 6.

" admit of proof, otherwiſe proof would " extend *in infinitum*, which is altogether " incompatible with its nature *; and " that if ever men attempt to prove a firſt " principle, it is becauſe they are igno- " rant of the nature of proof †."

The word *Reaſon* is uſed in ſeveral different ſenſes. 1. It is uſed to ſignify that quality of human nature which diſtinguiſhes man from the inferior animals. Man is called a reaſonable being, and the brutes are ſaid to be irrational. But the faculty of reaſon, taking the word in a ſtrict ſenſe, is perhaps not more characteriſtical of the nature of man, than his moral faculty, or his imagination, or his power of artificial language, or his riſibility. Reaſon, in this acceptation, ſeems

* Ὅλως μὲν γὰρ ἁπάντων ἀδύνατον ἀπόδειξιν εἶναι· εἰς ἄπειρον γὰρ ἂν βαδίζοι· ὥστε μηδ' ὕντως εἶναι ἀπόδειξιν.

Ariſtot. Metaphſ lib. 4. cap. 4. ſub initio.

† Ἀξιοῦσι δὲ καὶ τοῦτο ἀποδεικνύναι τινὲς δι' ἀπαιδευσίαν· ἔστι γὰρ ἀπαιδευσία, τὸ μὴ γινώσκειν τίνων δεῖ ζητεῖν ἀπόδειξιν, καὶ τίνων οὐ δεῖ.

Ib. Ibid.

I cite theſe authorities, that I may not be ſuſpected of affecting either an uncommon doctrine, or uncommon modes of expreſſion.

to

to be a general name for all the intellectual powers, as diſtinguiſhed from the ſenſitive part of our conſtitution. 2. Every thing that is called truth is ſometimes ſaid to be perceived by reaſon: by reaſon we are ſaid to perceive, that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles; and we are alſo ſaid to perceive, by reaſon, that it is impoſſible for the ſame thing to be, and not to be. But theſe truths are of different kinds; and therefore the energies of underſtanding to which they are referred ought to be called by different names. 3. The power of invention is ſometimes aſcribed to reaſon. Thus Locke tells us, that it is reaſon which *diſcovers* and *arranges* the ſeveral intermediate proofs in an argument; an office which, according to the common uſe of words, is to be referred, not to reaſon, but to imagination. 4. Reaſon, as implying a faculty not marked by any other name, is uſed by thoſe who are moſt accurate in diſtinguiſhing, to ſignify that power of the human mind by which we draw inferences, or by which we are convinced, that a relation belongs to two ideas, on account of our having found, that

theſe ideas bear certain relations to other ideas. In a word, it is that faculty which enables us, from relations or ideas that are known, to inveſtigate ſuch as are unknown; and without which we never could proceed in the diſcovery of truth a ſingle ſtep beyond firſt principles or intuitive axioms. And it is in this laſt ſenſe we are to uſe the word *Reaſon* in the courſe of this inquiry.

The term *Common Senſe* is alſo uſed in ſeveral different ſignifications. 1. Sometimes it ſeems to be ſynonymous with prudence. Thus we ſay, that a man poſſeſſeth a large ſtock of common ſenſe, who is quick in perceiving remote conſequences, thence inſtantaneouſly determining concerning the propriety of preſent conduct. 2. Common ſenſe, in certain inſtances, ſeemeth to be confounded with ſome of the powers of taſte. We often meet with perſons of ſtrong ſagacity in moſt of the ordinary affairs of life, and who are very capable of accurate reaſoning, who yet, without any bad intention, commit the moſt egregious blunders with regard to decorum; both ſaying and doing what is offenſive to their company, and inconſiſtent with their

their own character: and this we are apt to impute to a defect in common ſenſe. But it ſeems rather to be owing to a defect in that kind of ſenſibility, or ſympathy, by which we ſuppoſe ourſelves in the ſituations of others, adopt their ſentiments, and in a manner perceive their very thoughts; and which is indeed the foundation of good-breeding. It is by this ſecret, and ſudden, and (to thoſe who are unacquainted with it) inexplicable, communication of feelings, that a man is enabled to avoid what would appear incongruous or offenſive to others. They whoſe ſituation in life obligeth them to ſtudy to recommend themſelves to others, acquire a wonderful facility in perceiving and avoiding all poſſible ways of giving offence; which is a proof, that this kind of ſenſibility may be much improved by habit: although there are, no doubt, in reſpect of this, as well as of all other modifications of perception, original and conſtitutional differences in the frame of different minds. 3. Some men are diſtinguiſhed by an uncommon acuteneſs in diſcovering the characters of others: they ſeem to read the ſoul in the countenance, and with a ſingle

ſingle glance to penetrate the deepeſt receſſes of the heart. Before ſuch perſons, the hypocrite is detected, notwithſtanding his ſpecious pretences; the gay effrontery of the coxcomb cannot conceal his inſignificance; and the man of merit appears conſpicuous under all the diſguiſes of an unaſſuming and ungainly modeſty. This talent is ſometimes called *Common Senſe*; but very improperly. It is far from being common; it is even exceedingly rare: it is to be found in men who are not remarkable for any other mental excellence; and we often ſee thoſe who in other reſpects are judicious enough, quite deſtitute of it.

4. Neither ought every common opinion to be referred to common ſenſe. Modes in dreſs, religion, and converſation, however abſurd in themſelves, do often obtain the ſanction of general approbation. But none will ſay, that it is agreeable to common ſenſe, to worſhip more gods than one; to believe that one and the ſame body may be in ten thouſand different places at the ſame time *; to like a face the better becauſe it is painted, or to diſlike

* Tranſubſtantiation.

a perſon becauſe he does not liſp in his pronunciation. Laſtly, The term *Common Senſe* hath in modern times been uſed by philoſophers, both French and Britiſh, to ſignify that power of the mind which perceives truth, or commands belief, not by progreſſive argumentation, but by an inſtantaneous, inſtinctive, and irreſiſtible impulſe; derived neither from education nor from habit, but from nature; acting independently on our will, whenever its object is preſented, according to an eſtabliſhed law, and therefore properly called *Senſe* *; and acting in a ſimilar manner upon all, or at leaſt upon a great majority of mankind, and therefore properly called *Common Senſe*. It is in this ſignification that the term *Common Senſe* is uſed in the preſent inquiry.

That there is a real and eſſential difference between theſe two faculties; that common ſenſe cannot be accounted for, by being called the perfection of reaſon, nor reaſon, by being reſolved into common

* For the circumſtances that characteriſe a *Senſe*, ſee Dr Gerard's Eſſay on Taſte, part 3. ſect. 1. Note.

ſenſe, will appear from the following conſiderations. 1. We are conſcious, from internal feeling, that the energy of underſtanding which perceives intuitive truth, is different from that other energy which unites a concluſion with a firſt principle, by a gradual chain of intermediate relations. We believe the truth of an inveſtigated concluſion, becauſe we can aſſign a reaſon for our belief; we believe an intuitive principle, without being able to aſſign any other reaſon for our belief than this, that the law of our nature determines us to believe it, even as the law of our nature determines us to ſee a colour when preſented to our open eyes at noonday. 2. We cannot diſcern any neceſſary connection between reaſon and common ſenſe: they are indeed generally connected; but we can conceive a being endued with the one who is deſtitute of the other. Nay, we often find, that this is in fact the caſe. In dreams, we ſometimes reaſon without common ſenſe. Through a defect of common ſenſe, we adopt abſurd principles; but ſuppoſing our principles true, our reaſoning is often unexceptionable. The ſame thing may be obſerved

obſerved in certain kinds of madneſs. A man who believes himſelf made of glaſs, may yet reaſon very juſtly concerning the means of preſerving his ſuppoſed brittleneſs from flaws and fractures. Nay, what is ſtill more to the purpoſe, we ſometimes meet with perſons, whom it would be injurious to charge with inſanity, who, though defective in common ſenſe, have yet, by converſing much with polemical writers, improved their reaſoning faculty to ſuch a degree, as to puzzle and put to ſilence thoſe who are greatly their ſuperiors in every other mental endowment. 3. This inſtance ſuggeſteth a third difference between theſe two faculties, namely, that the one is more in our power than the other. There are few powers, either of our mind or body, more improveable by culture, than the reaſoning faculty; whereas common ſenſe, like other inſtincts, arrives at maturity with almoſt no care of ours. To teach the art of reaſoning, or rather of wrangling, is eaſy; but it is impoſſible to teach common ſenſe to one who wants it. You may make a man remember a ſet of firſt principles, and ſay that he believes them, even as you may teach one

born blind to ſpeak intelligibly of colours and light; but neither to the one, nor to the other, can you by any means communicate the peculiar feeling which accompanies the operation of that faculty which nature has denied him. A man defective in common ſenſe may acquire learning; he may even poſſeſs genius to a certain degree: but the defect of nature he never can ſupply: a peculiar modification of ſcepticiſm, or credulity, or levity, will to the very end of his life diſtinguiſh him from other men. It would evidence a deplorable degree of irrationality, if a man could not perceive the truth of a geometrical axiom; ſuch inſtances are uncommon: but the number of ſelf-evident principles cogniſable by man is very great, and more vigour of mind may be neceſſary to the perception of ſome, than to the perception of others. In this reſpect, therefore, there may be great diverſities in the meaſure of common ſenſe which different men enjoy. Further, of two men, one of whom, though he acknowledges the truth of a firſt principle, is but little affected by it, and is eaſily induced to become ſceptical in regard to it; while the other has a vivid

vid perception of its truth, is deeply affected by it, and firmly truſts to his own feelings without doubt or heſitation; I ſhould not ſcruple to ſay, that the latter poſſeſſes the greater ſhare of common ſenſe: and in this reſpect too, I preſume the minds of different men will be found to be very different. Such diverſities are, I think, to be referred, for the moſt part, to the original conſtitution of the mind, which it is not in the power of education to alter. I acknowledge, however, that common ſenſe, like other inſtincts, may languiſh for want of exerciſe; as in the caſe of a perſon who, blinded by a falſe religion, has been all his days accuſtomed to diſtruſt his own ſentiments, and to receive his creed from the mouth of a prieſt. I acknowledge alſo, that freedom of inquiry doth generally produce a juſter, as well as more liberal, turn of thinking, than can ever be expected while men account it damnable even to think differently from the eſtabliſhed mode. But from this we can only infer, that common ſenſe is improveable to a certain degree. Or perhaps this only proves, that the dictates of common ſenſe are ſometimes over-ruled,

led, and rendered ineffectual, by the influence of ſophiſtry and ſuperſtition operating upon a puſillanimous and diffident temper. 4. It deſerves alſo to be remarked, that a diſtinction extremely ſimilar to the preſent is acknowledged by the vulgar, who ſpeak of mother-wit as ſomething different from the deductions of reaſon, and the refinements of ſcience. When puzzled with argument, they have recourſe to their common ſenſe, and acquieſce in its deciſions ſo ſteadily, as often to render all the arts of the logician ineffectual. "I am "confuted, but not convinced," is an apology ſometimes offered, when one has nothing to oppoſe to the arguments of the antagoniſt, but the original undiſguiſed feelings of his own mind. This apology is indeed very inconſiſtent with the dignity of philoſophic pride; which, taking it for granted that nothing exceeds the limits of human capacity, profeſſeth to confute whatever it cannot believe, and, which is ſtill more difficult, to believe whatever it cannot confute: but this apology may be perfectly conſiſtent with ſincerity and candor, and with that principle of which Pope ſays,

ſays, that " though no ſcience, it is fairly " worth the ſeven."

Thus far we have endeavoured to diſtinguiſh and aſcertain the ſeparate provinces of Reaſon and Common Senſe. Their connection and mutual dependence, and the extent of their reſpective juriſdictions, we now proceed more particularly to inveſtigate.

It is ſtrange to obſerve, with what reluctance ſome people acknowledge the power of inſtinct. That man is governed by reaſon, and the brutes by inſtinct, is a favourite topic with ſome philoſophers; who, like other froward children, ſpurn the hand that leads them, and deſire, above all things, to be left at their own diſpoſal. Were this boaſt founded in truth, it might be ſuppoſed to mean little more, than that man is governed by himſelf, and the brutes by their Maker *. But, luckily for man, it is not founded in truth, but in ignorance, inattention, and ſelf-conceit. Our inſtincts, as well as our ra-

* And Reaſon raiſe o'er Inſtinct as you can,
In this 'tis God directs, in that 'tis man.
Pope's Eſſay on Man, Ep. 3. ver. 99.

tional

tional powers, are far ſuperior, both in number and dignity, to thoſe which the brutes enjoy; and it were well for us, on many occaſions, if we laid our ſyſtems aſide, and were more attentive in obſerving thoſe impulſes of nature in which reaſon has no part. Far be it from me to ſpeak with diſreſpect of any of the gifts of God; every work of his is good; but the beſt things, when abuſed, may become pernicious. Reaſon is a noble faculty, and, when kept within its proper ſphere, and applied to uſeful purpoſes, proves a mean of exalting human creatures almoſt to the rank of ſuperior beings. But this faculty has been much perverted, often to vile, and often to inſignificant purpoſes; ſometimes chained like a ſlave or malefactor, and ſometimes ſoaring in forbidden and unknown regions. No wonder, then, if it hath been frequently made the inſtrument of ſeducing and bewildering mankind, and of rendering philoſophy contemptible.

In the ſcience of body, glorious diſcoveries have been made by a right uſe of reaſon. When men are once ſatisfied to take things as they find them; when they believe

lieve Nature upon her bare declaration, without ſuſpecting her of any deſign to impoſe upon them; when their utmoſt ambition is to be her ſervants and humble interpreters; then, and not till then, will philoſophy proſper. But of thoſe who have applied themſelves to the ſcience of Human Nature, it may truly be ſaid, (of many of them at leaſt), that too much reaſoning hath made them mad. Nature ſpeaks to us by our external, as well as by our internal, ſenſes; it is ſtrange, that we ſhould believe her in the one caſe, and not in the other; it is moſt ſtrange, that ſuppoſing her fallacious, we ſhould think ourſelves capable of detecting the cheat. Common Senſe tells me, that the ground on which I ſtand is hard, material, and ſolid, and has a real, ſeparate, independent exiſtence. BERKELEY and HUME tell me, that I am impoſed upon in this matter; for that the ground under my feet is really an idea in my mind; that its very eſſence conſiſts in being perceived; and that the ſame inſtant it ceaſes to be perceived, it muſt alſo ceaſe to exiſt: in a word, that *to be*, and *to be perceived*, when predicated of the ground, the ſun, the

ſtarry heavens, or any corporeal object, ſignify preciſely the ſame thing. Now if my common ſenſe be miſtaken, who ſhall aſcertain and correct the miſtake? Our reaſon, it is ſaid. Are then the inferences of reaſon in this inſtance clearer, and more deciſive, than the dictates of common ſenſe? By no means: I ſtill truſt to my common ſenſe as before, and I feel that I muſt do ſo. But ſuppoſing the inferences of the one faculty as clear and deciſive as the dictates of the other, yet who will aſſure me, that my reaſon is leſs liable to miſtake than my common ſenſe? And if reaſon be miſtaken, what ſhall we ſay? Is this miſtake to be rectified by a ſecond reaſoning, as liable to miſtake as the firſt? In a word, we muſt deny the diſtinction between truth and falſehood, adopt univerſal ſcepticiſm, and wander without end from one maze of error and uncertainty to another; a ſtate of mind ſo miſerable, that Milton makes it one of the torments of the damned;—or elſe we muſt ſuppoſe, that one of theſe faculties is naturally of higher authority than the other; and that either reaſon ought to ſubmit to common ſenſe, or common ſenſe to reaſon,

ſon, whenever a variance happens between them. It has been ſaid, that every inquiry in philoſophy ought to begin with doubt; that nothing is to be taken for granted, and nothing believed, without proof. If this be admitted, it muſt alſo be admitted, that reaſon is the ultimate judge of truth, to which common ſenſe muſt continually act in ſubordination. But this I cannot admit; becauſe I am able to prove the contrary by the moſt inconteſtable evidence. I am able to prove, that "except we believe many things without "proof, we never can believe any thing "at all; for that all ſound reaſoning muſt "ultimately reſt on the principles of com-"mon ſenſe, that is, on principles intui-"tively certain, or intuitively probable; "and, conſequently, that common ſenſe is "the ultimate judge of truth, to which "reaſon muſt continually act in ſubordi-"nation."—This I ſhall prove by a fair induction of particulars.

CHAP. II.

All Reaſoning terminates in firſt principles. All Evidence ultimately intuitive. Common Senſe the Standard of Truth.

IN this induction, we cannot propoſe to comprehend every ſort of evidence, and every ſpecies of reaſoning; but we ſhall endeavour to inveſtigate the origin of thoſe kinds of evidence which are the moſt important, and of the moſt extenſive influence in ſcience, and in common life *; beginning with the ſimpleſt and moſt

* That the induction here given is ſufficiently comprehenſive, will appear from the following analyſis.

All the objects of the human underſtanding have been reduced to two claſſes, viz. *Abſtract Ideas*, and *Things really exiſting*.

Of *Abſtract Ideas, and their Relations*, all our knowledge is *certain*, being founded on MATHEMATICAL EVIDENCE (*a*); which comprehends, 1. Intuitive Evidence, and, 2. The Evidence of ſtrict demonſtration.

(*a*) Section 1.

We

moſt obvious, and advancing gradually to thoſe which are more complicated, or leſs perſpicuous.

We judge of *Things really exiſting*, either, 1. from *our own experience*; or, 2. from *the experience of other men*.

1. Judging of *Real Exiſtences* from *our own experience*, we attain either *Certainty* or *Probability*. Our knowledge is *certain* when ſupported by the evidence, 1. Of SENSE EXTERNAL (*a*) and INTERNAL (*b*); 2. Of MEMORY (*c*); and, 3. Of LEGITIMATE INFERENCES OF THE CAUSE FROM THE EFFECT (*d*).——Our knowledge is *probable*, when, *from* facts already experienced, we argue, 1. *to* facts OF THE SAME KIND (*e*) not experienced; and, 2. *to* facts OF A SIMILAR KIND (*f*) not experienced. This knowledge, though called *probable*, often riſes to moral certainty.

2. Judging of *Real Exiſtences* from *the experience of other men*, we have the EVIDENCE OF THEIR TESTIMONY (*g*). The mode of underſtanding produced by that evidence is properly called *Faith*; and this faith ſometimes amounts to *probable opinion*, and ſometimes riſes even to *abſolute certainty*.

(*a*) Sect. 2. (*b*) Sect. 3. (*c*) Sect. 4. (*d*) Sect. 5. (*e*) Sect. 6. (*f*) Sect. 7. (*g*) Sect. 8.

SECT.

SECTION I.

Of Mathematical Reaſoning.

THE evidence which takes place in pure mathematics, produceth the higheſt aſſurance and certainty in the mind of him who attends to it, and underſtands it; for no principles are admitted into this ſcience, but ſuch as are either ſelf-evident, or ſuſceptible of demonſtration. Should a man refuſe to believe a demonſtrated concluſion, the world would impute his obſtinacy, either to want of underſtanding, or to want of honeſty: for every perſon of underſtanding feels, that by mathematical demonſtration he muſt be convinced, whether he will or not. There are two kinds of mathematical demonſtration. The firſt is called *direct*, and takes place when a concluſion is inferred from premiſes which render it neceſſarily true: and this perhaps is a more perfect, or at leaſt a ſimpler, kind of proof, than the other; but both are equally convincing. The other kind is called *indirect*,

rect, *apagogical*, or *ducens ad abſurdum*; and takes place when, by ſuppoſing a propoſition falſe, we are neceſſarily led into an abſurdity, which there is no other way of avoiding, than by ſuppoſing the propoſition true. In this manner it is proved, that the propoſition is not, and cannot be, falſe; or, in other words, that it is certainly true. Every ſtep in a mathematical proof either is ſelf-evident, or muſt have been formerly demonſtrated; and every demonſtration doth finally reſolve itſelf into intuitive or ſelf-evident principles, which it is impoſſible to prove, and equally impoſſible to diſbelieve. Theſe firſt principles conſtitute the foundation of mathematical ſcience: if you can diſprove them, you overturn the whole ſcience; if you refuſe to believe them, you cannot, conſiſtently with this refuſal, acquieſce in any mathematical truth whatſoever. But you may as well attempt to blow out the ſun with a pair of bellows, as to diſprove theſe principles; and if you ſay, that you do not believe them *, you will

* Si quelque opiniaſtre les nie de la voix, on ne l'en ſçauroit empeſcher; mais cela ne luy eſt pas permis interieurement

will be charged either with falſehood or with folly; you may as well hold your hand in the fire, and ſay that you feel no pain. The law of our nature obligeth us to feel in the one caſe, and to believe in the other; even as it obligeth us to adhere to the earth, and not fall headlong towards the clouds.

But who will pretend to prove a mathematical axiom, That a whole is greater than a part, or, That things equal to one and the ſame thing are equal to one another? Every proof muſt be clearer and more evident than the thing to be proved. Can you then aſſume any more evident principle, from which the truth of theſe axioms may be conſequentially inferred? It is impoſſible; becauſe they are already as evident as any thing whatſoever can be *. You may bring the matter to the teſt

terieurement en ſon eſprit, parce que ſa lumiere naturelle y repugne, qui eſt la partie où ſe rapporte la demonſtration et le ſyllogiſme, et non aux paroles externes. Au moyen de quoy s'il ſe trouve quelqu'un qui ne les puiſſe entendre, cettuy-là eſt incapable de diſcipline.

Dialectique de Bouju, liv. 3. ch. 3.

* Different opinions have prevailed concerning the nature of theſe geometrical axioms. Some ſuppoſe, that an

teſt of the ſenſes, by laying a few halfpence and farthings upon the table; but the evidence of ſenſe is not more unqueſtionable, than that of abſtract intuitive truth; and therefore the former evidence, though

an axiom is not ſelf-evident, except it imply an identical propoſition; that therefore this axiom, *It is impoſſible for the ſame thing, at the ſame time, to be and not to be*, is the only axiom that can properly be called intuitive; and that all thoſe other propoſitions commonly called *axioms*, ought to be demonſtrated by being reſolved into this fundamental axiom. But if this could be done, which I fear is not poſſible, mathematical truth would not be one whit more certain than it is. Thoſe other axioms produce abſolute certainty, and produce it immediately, without any proceſs of thought or reaſoning that we can diſcover. And if the truth of a propoſition be clearly and certainly perceived by all men without proof, and if no proof whatſoever could make it more clear or more certain, it ſeems captious not to allow that propoſition the name of *Intuitive Axiom*.——Others ſuppoſe, that though the demonſtration of mathematical axioms is not abſolutely neceſſary, yet that theſe axioms are ſuſceptible of demonſtration, and ought to be demonſtrated to thoſe who require it. Dr Barrow is of this opinion. So is Apollonius; who, agreeably to it, has attempted a demonſtration of this axiom, That *things equal to one and the ſame thing are equal to one another*.—— But whatever account we make of theſe opinions, they affect not our doctrine. However far the demonſtration of axioms may be carried, it muſt at laſt terminate in *one* principle of common ſenſe, if not in *many*; which principle we muſt take for granted whether we will or not.

to one ignorant of the meaning of the terms, it might ſerve to explain and illuſtrate the latter, can never prove it. But not to reſt any thing on the ſignification we affix to the word *proof*, and to remove every poſſibility of doubt as to this matter, let us ſuppoſe, that the evidence of external ſenſe is more unqueſtionable than that of abſtract intuitive truth, and that every intuitive principle in mathematics may thus be brought to the teſt of ſenſe; and if we cannot call the evidence of ſenſe a proof, let us call it a confirmation of the abſtract principle: yet what do we gain by this method of illuſtration? We only diſcover, that the evidence of abſtract intuitive truth is reſolvible into, or may be illuſtrated by, the evidence of ſenſe. And it will be ſeen in the next ſection, that we believe in the evidence of external ſenſe, not becauſe we can prove it to be true, but becauſe the law of our nature determines us to believe in it without proof. So that in whatever way we view this ſubject, the point we propoſe to illuſtrate appears unqueſtionably certain, namely, "That all mathematical truth is "founded in certain firſt principles, which

"common

"common ſenſe or inſtinct compels us to "believe without proof, whether we will or "not."

Nor would the foundation of mathematics be in the leaſt degree more ſtable, if theſe axioms did admit of proof. As the caſe now ſtands, we are abſolutely certain of their truth; and abſolute certainty is the utmoſt that demonſtration can produce. We are convinced by a proof, becauſe our conſtitution is ſuch, that we muſt be convinced by it: and we believe a ſelf-evident axiom, becauſe our conſtitution is ſuch that we muſt believe it. You aſk, why I believe what is ſelf-evident? I may as well aſk, why you believe what is proved? Neither queſtion admits of an anſwer; or rather, to both queſtions the anſwer is the ſame, namely, Becauſe I muſt believe it.

Whether our belief in theſe caſes be agreeable to the eternal relations and fitneſſes of things, and ſuch as we ſhould entertain if we were perfectly acquainted with all the laws of nature, is a queſtion which no perſon of a ſound mind can have any ſcruple to anſwer, with the fulleſt aſſurance, in the affirmative. Certain it is,

that our conſtitution is ſo framed, that we muſt believe that to be true, and conformable to univerſal nature, which is intimated to us by the original ſuggeſtions of our own underſtanding. If theſe ſuggeſtions are fallacious, it is the Deity who makes them ſo; and therefore we can never rectify, or even detect, the fallacy. But we cannot even ſuppoſe them fallacious, without violating our nature; nor, if we acknowledge a God, without the moſt abſurd and moſt audacious impiety; for in this ſuppoſition it is implied, that we ſuppoſe the Deity a deceiver. Nor can we, conſiſtently with ſuch a ſuppoſition, acknowledge any diſtinction between truth and falſehood, or believe that one inch is leſs than ten thouſand miles, or even that we ourſelves exiſt.

SECT. II.

Of the Evidence of External Senſe.

ANother claſs of truths which produce conviction, and abſolute certainty, are thoſe which depend upon the evidence of the external ſenſes; Hearing, Seeing, Touching,

Touching, Taſting, and Smelling. On this evidence depends all our knowledge of external or material things; and therefore all concluſions in Natural Philoſophy, and all thoſe prudential maxims which regard the preſervation of our body, as it is liable to be affected by the ſenſible qualities of matter, muſt finally be reſolved into this principle, That things are as our ſenſes repreſent them. When I touch a ſtone, I am conſcious of a certain ſenſation, which I call *a ſenſation of hardneſs*. But this ſenſation is not hardneſs itſelf, nor any thing like hardneſs: it is nothing more than a ſenſation or feeling in my mind; accompanied, however, with an irreſiſtible belief, that this ſenſation is excited by the application of an external and hard ſubſtance to ſome part of my body. This belief as certainly accompanies the ſenſation, as the ſenſation accompanies the application of the ſtone to my organ of ſenſe. I believe, with as much aſſurance, and as unavoidably, that the external thing exiſts, and is hard, as I believe that I receive, and am conſcious of, the ſenſation of hardneſs, or, to ſpeak more ſtrictly, the ſenſation which by experience I know to be the

ſign

ſign of my touching a hard body *. Now, why do I believe that this ſenſation is a real ſenſation, and really felt by me? Becauſe my conſtitution is ſuch that I muſt believe ſo. And why do I believe, in conſequence of my receiving this ſenſation, that I touch an external object, really exiſting, material, and hard? The anſwer is the ſame: the matter is incapable of proof: I believe, becauſe I muſt believe. Can I avoid believing, that I really am conſcious of receiving this ſenſation? No, certainly. Can I avoid believing, that the external thing exiſts, and has a certain quality, which fits it, on being applied to my hand, to excite a certain feeling or ſenſation in my mind? No; I muſt believe this, whether I will or not. Nor could I diveſt myſelf of this belief, though my life and future happineſs depended on the conſequence. — To believe our ſenſes, is, therefore, according to the law of our nature; and we are prompted to this belief, not by reaſon, but by inſtinct, or common ſenſe. I am as certain, that at preſent I

* See Dr Reid's Inquiry into the human mind, chap. 5. ſect. 3.

am

am in a houſe, and not in the open air; that I ſee by the light of the ſun, and not by the light of a candle; that I feel the ground hard under my feet; and that I lean againſt a real material table,—as I can be of the truth of any geometrical axiom, or of any demonſtrated concluſion; nay, I am as certain of all this as I am of my own exiſtence. But I cannot prove by argument, that there is ſuch a thing as matter in the world, or even that I myſelf exiſt: and yet I know as aſſuredly, that I do exiſt, and that there is a real material ſun, and a real material world, with mountains, trees, houſes, and animals, exiſting ſeparately and independently on me and my faculties; I ſay, I know all this with as much aſſurance of conviction, as the moſt irrefragable demonſtration could produce. Is it unreaſonable to believe in theſe caſes without proof? Then, I affirm, it is equally unreaſonable to believe in any caſe with proof. Our belief in either caſe is unavoidable, and according to the law of our nature; and if it be unreaſonable to think according to the law of our nature, it is equally unreaſonable to adhere to the earth, to be nouriſhed with food, or to die

die when the head is ſeparated from the body. It is indeed eaſy to affirm any thing, provided a man can reconcile himſelf to hypocriſy and falſehood. A man may affirm, that he ſees with the ſoles of his feet, that he believes there is no material world, that he diſbelieves his own exiſtence. He may as well ſay, that he believes one and two to be equal to ſix, a part to be greater than a whole, a circle to be a triangle, and that it is poſſible for the ſame thing, at the ſame time, to be and not to be.

But it is ſaid, that our ſenſes do often impoſe upon us, and that by means of reaſon we are enabled to detect the impoſture, and to judge rightly even where our ſenſes give us wrong information; that therefore our belief in the evidence of ſenſe is not inſtinctive or intuitive, but ſuch as may be either confuted or confirmed by reaſoning. We ſhall acknowledge, that our ſenſes do often impoſe upon us: but a little attention will convince us, that reaſon, though it may be employed in correcting the preſent fallacious ſenſation, by referring it to a former ſenſation received by us, or by other men, is not the ultimate

ultimate judge in this matter; for that all ſuch reaſoning is reſolvible into this principle of common ſenſe, That things are what our external ſenſes repreſent them. One inſtance will be ſufficient for illuſtration of this point.

After having looked a moment at the ſun, I ſee a black, or perhaps a luminous, circle ſwimming in the air, apparently at the diſtance of two or three feet from my eyes. That I ſee ſuch a circle, is certain; that I believe I ſee it, is certain; that I believe its appearance to be owing to ſome cauſe, is alſo certain: — thus far there can be no impoſture, and there is no ſuppoſition of any. Suppoſe from this appearance I conclude, that a real, ſolid, tangible or viſible, round ſubſtance, of a black or yellow colour, is actually ſwimming in the air before me; in this I ſhould be miſtaken. How then come I to know that I am miſtaken? I may know this in ſeveral ways. 1. I ſtretch out my hand to the place where the circle appears floating; and having felt nothing, I am inſtantly convinced, that there is no tangible ſubſtance in that place. Is this conviction an inference of reaſon? No;

it is a conviction ariſing from our innate propenſity to believe, that things are as our ſenſes repreſent them. By this innate or inſtinctive propenſity I believe, that what I touch exiſts; by the ſame propenſity I believe, that where I touch nothing, there nothing tangible doth exiſt. If in the preſent caſe I were ſuſpicious of the veracity of my ſenſes, I ſhould neither believe nor diſbelieve. 2. I turn my eyes towards the oppoſite quarter of the heavens; and having ſtill obſerved the ſame circle floating before them, and knowing by experience, that the motion of bodies placed at a diſtance from me does not follow or depend on the motion of my body, I conclude, that the appearance is owing, not to a real, external, corporeal object, but to ſome diſorder in my organ of ſight. Here reaſoning is employed: but where does it terminate? It terminates in experience, which I have acquired by means of my ſenſes. But if I believed them fallacious, if I believed things to be otherwiſe than my ſenſes repreſent them, I ſhould never acquire experience at all. Or, 3. I apply, firſt to one man, then to another, and then to a third

third, who all aſſure me, that they perceive no ſuch circle floating in the air, and the ſame time acquaint me with the true cauſe of the appearance. I believe their declaration, either becauſe I have had experience of their veracity, or becauſe I have an innate propenſity to credit teſtimony. To gain experience implies a belief in the evidence of ſenſe, which reaſoning cannot account for; and a propenſity to credit teſtimony previous to experience or reaſoning, is equally unaccountable *.——So that, although we acknowledge ſome of our ſenſes, in ſome inſtances, deceitful, our detection of the deceit, whether by the evidence of our other ſenſes, or by a retroſpect to our paſt experience, or by our truſting to the teſtimony of other men, doth ſtill imply, that we do and muſt believe our ſenſes previouſly to all reaſoning.

A human creature born with a propenſity to diſbelieve his ſenſes, would be as uſeleſs and helpleſs as if he wanted them. To his own preſervation he could contribute nothing; and, after ages of be-

* See ſect. 8. of this chapter.

ing, would remain as deſtitute of knowledge and experience, as when he began to be.

Sometimes we ſeem to diſtruſt the evidence of our ſenſes, when in reality we only doubt whether we have that evidence or not. I may appeal to any man, if he were thoroughly convinced that he had really, when awake, ſeen and converſed with a ghoſt, whether any reaſoning would convince him that it was a deluſion. Reaſoning might lead him to ſuſpect, that he had been dreaming, and therefore to doubt whether or not he had the evidence of ſenſe; but if he were aſſured that he had that evidence, no arguments whatſoever would ſhake his belief.

SECT. III.

Of the Evidence of Internal Senſe.

BY attending to what paſſes in my mind, I know, not only that it exiſts, but alſo that it exerts certain powers of action and

and perception; which, on account either of a diverſity in their objects, or of a difference in their manner of operating, I conſider as ſeparate and diſtinct faculties; and which I find it expedient to diſtinguiſh by different names, that I may be able to ſpeak of them ſo as to be underſtood. Thus I am conſcious, that at one time I exert memory, at another time imagination: ſometimes I believe, ſometimes I doubt: the performance of certain actions, and the indulgence of certain affections, is attended with an agreeable feeling of a peculiar kind, which I call moral approbation; different actions and affections excite the oppoſite feeling, of moral diſapprobation: to relieve diſtreſs, I feel to be meritorious and praiſe-worthy; to pick a pocket, I know to be blameable, and worthy of puniſhment: I am conſcious, that ſome actions are in my power, that others are not; that when I neglect to do what I ought to do, and can do, I deſerve to be puniſhed; and that when I act neceſſarily, or upon unavoidable and irreſiſtible compulſion, I deſerve neither puniſhment nor blame. Of all theſe ſentiments I am as conſcious, and as certain, as I am

of

of my own exiſtence. I cannot prove that I feel them, neither to myſelf, nor to others; but that I do really feel them, is as evident to me as demonſtration could make it. I cannot prove, in regard to my moral feelings, that they are conformable to any extrinſic and eternal relations of things; but I know that my conſtitution neceſſarily determines me to believe them juſt and genuine, even as it determines me to believe that I myſelf exiſt, and that things are as my external ſenſes repreſent them. And a ſophiſter could no more prove to my conviction, that theſe feelings are fallacious, or that I have no ſuch feelings, than he could prove to my conviction, that two and two may be equal to five, or that my friend is as much preſent with me when I think of him at a thouſand miles diſtance, as when I ſit and converſe with him in the ſame chamber. An expert logician might perhaps puzzle me with words, and propoſe difficulties I could not ſolve: but he might as well attempt to convince me, that I do not exiſt, as that I do not feel what I am conſcious I do feel. And if he could induce me to ſuſpect that I may poſ-

ſibly

ſibly be miſtaken, what ſtandard of truth could he propoſe to me, more evident, and of higher authority, than my own feelings? Shall I believe his teſtimony, and diſbelieve my own ſenſations? Shall I admit his reaſons, becauſe I cannot confute them, although common ſenſe tells me they are falſe? Shall I ſuffer the ambiguities of artificial language to prevail againſt the clear, the intelligible, the irreſiſtible voice of nature? —Am I to judge of the colouring of a flower by moonſhine, or by the light of the ſun? Or, becauſe I cannot by candle-light diſtinguiſh green from blue, ſhall I therefore infer, that green and blue are the ſame?

We cannot diſbelieve the evidence of internal ſenſe, without offering violence to our nature. And if we be led into ſuch diſbelief or diſtruſt by the ſophiſtry of pretended philoſophers, we act juſt as wiſely as a mariner would do, who ſhould ſuffer himſelf to be perſuaded, that the pole-ſtar is continually changing its place, but that the wind always blows from the ſame quarter. Common ſenſe, or inſtinct, which prompts men to truſt to their own

own feelings, hath in all ages continued the ſame: but the intereſts, purſuits, and abilities of philoſophers, are ſuſceptible of endleſs variety; and their theories vary accordingly.

Let it not be thought, that theſe objects and faculties of internal ſenſation are matters too evaneſcent to be attended to, or that their evidence is too weak to produce a ſteady and well-grounded conviction. They are more neceſſary to our happineſs than even the powers and objects of external ſenſe; yea, they are no leſs neceſſary to our exiſtence. What can be of greater conſequence to man, than his moral ſentiments, his reaſon, his memory, his imagination? What more intereſting, than to know, whether his notions of duty and of truth be the dictates of his nature, that is, the voice of God, or the poſitive inſtitutions of men? What is it to which a wiſe man will pay more attention, than to his reaſon and conſcience, thoſe divine monitors by which he is to judge even of religion itſelf, and which he is not at liberty to diſobey, though an angel from heaven ſhould command him? The generality of mankind, however ignorant of the

the received diſtinctions and explications of their internal powers, do yet by their conduct declare, that they feel their authority, and acknowledge their authenticity. Every inſtance of their being governed by a principle of moral obligation, is a proof of this. They believe an action to be lawful in the ſight of God, when they are conſcious of a ſentiment of lawfulneſs attending the performance of it: they believe a certain mode of conduct to be incumbent on them in certain circumſtances, becauſe a ſentiment of duty ariſes in their mind, when they contemplate that conduct in relation to thoſe circumſtances.—"I ought to be grateful for a "favour received. Why? Becauſe my "conſcience tells me ſo. How do you "know that you ought to do that of "which your conſcience enjoins the per-"formance? I can give no further rea-"ſon for it; but I *feel* that ſuch is my "duty." Here the inveſtigation muſt ſtop; or, if carried a little further, it muſt return to this point:—"I know "that I ought to do what my conſcience "enjoins, becauſe God is the author of "my conſtitution; and I obey His will

" when I act according to the principles " of my conſtitution. Why do you o- " bey the will of God? Becauſe it is my " duty. How know you that? Becauſe " my conſcience tells me ſo," &c.

If a man were ſceptical in this matter, it would not be in the power of argument to cure him. Such a man could not be ſaid to have any moral principle diſtinct from the hope of reward, the fear of puniſhment, or the influence of cuſtom. But that there is in human nature a moral principle diſtinct from thoſe motives, has been felt and acknowledged by men of all ages and nations; and indeed was never denied or doubted, except by a few metaphyſicians, who, through want either of ſenſe or of honeſty, found themſelves diſpoſed to deny the exiſtence, or queſtion the authenticity, of our moral feelings. In the celebrated diſpute concerning liberty and neceſſity, the advocates for the latter have either maintained, that we have no ſenſe of moral liberty; or, granting that we have ſuch a ſenſe, have endeavoured to prove it fallacious *. Now, if

* See Eſſays on Morality and Natural Religion, p. 151. &c.

we

we be conſcious, that we have a ſenſe of moral liberty, it is certainly as abſurd to argue againſt the exiſtence of that ſenſe, as againſt the reality of any other matter of fact. And if the real exiſtence of this ſenſe be acknowledged, it cannot be proved to be fallacious by any arguments, which may not alſo be applied to prove every power of our nature fallacious, and, conſequently, to ſhow, that man ought not to believe any thing at all. But more of this afterwards.

We have no other direct evidence than this of conſciouſneſs, or internal ſenſation, for the exiſtence and identity of our own ſoul. I exiſt; I am the ſame being to-day I was yeſterday, and twenty years ago; this principle, or being, within me, that thinks and acts, is one permanent and individual principle, diſtinct from all other principles, beings, or things; — theſe are dictates of internal ſenſation natural to man, and univerſally acknowledged; and they are of ſo great importance, that while we doubt of their truth, we can hardly be intereſted in any thing elſe whatſoever. If I were to believe, with Mr HUME, and ſome others, that my mind

is perpetually changing, ſo as to become every different moment a different thing, the remembrance of paſt, or the anticipation of future good or evil, could give me neither pleaſure nor pain; yea, tho' I were to believe, that a cruel death would certainly overtake me within an hour, I ſhould be no more concerned, than if I were told, that a certain elephant three thouſand years hence would be ſacrificed on the top of Mount Atlas. To a man who doubts the individuality or identity of his own mind, virtue, truth, religion, good and evil, hope and fear, are abſolutely nothing.

Metaphyſicians have taken ſome pains to confound our notions on this ſubject; and, by eſtabliſhing the currency of certain ambiguous phraſes, have ſucceeded ſo well, that it is now hardly poſſible for us to explain theſe dictates of our nature, according to common ſenſe and common experience, in ſuch language as ſhall be liable to no exception. The misfortune is, that many of the words we muſt uſe, though extremely well underſtood, are either too ſimple or too complex in their meaning, to admit a logical definition;

ſo

ſo that the caviller is never at a loſs for an evaſive reply to any thing we may advance. But I will take it upon me to affirm, that there are hardly any human notions more clearly, or more univerſally underſtood, than thoſe we entertain concerning the identity both of ourſelves and of other things, however difficult we may ſometimes find it to expreſs thoſe notions in proper words. And I will alſo venture to affirm, that the ſentiments of the generality of mankind on this head are grounded on ſuch evidence, that he who refuſes to be convinced by it, acts irrationally, and cannot, conſiſtently with ſuch refuſal, believe any thing.

1. The exiſtence of our own mind, as ſomething different and diſtinct from the body, is univerſally acknowledged. I ſay univerſally; having never heard of any nation of men upon earth, who did not, in their converſation and behaviour, diſcover, by the plaineſt ſigns, that they made this diſtinction. Nay, ſo ſtrongly are mankind impreſſed with it, that the rudeſt barbarians, by their incantations, their funeral ſolemnities, their traditions concerning inviſible beings, and their hopes

hopes and opinions of a future ſtate, ſeem to be perſuaded, that to the exiſtence of the ſoul the body is not at all neceſſary. All philoſophers, a few Pyrrhoniſts excepted, have acknowledged the exiſtence of the ſoul, as one of the firſt and moſt unqueſtionable principles of human ſcience. Now whence could a notion ſo univerſal ariſe? Let us examine our own minds, and we ſhall find, that it could ariſe from nothing but conſciouſneſs, a certain irreſiſtible perſuaſion, that we have a ſoul diſtinct from the body. The evidence of this notion is intuitive; it is the evidence of internal ſenſe. Reaſoning can neither prove nor diſprove it. DES CARTES, and his diſciple MALEBRANCHE, acknowledge, that the exiſtence of the human ſoul muſt be believed by all men, even by thoſe who can bring themſelves to doubt of every thing elſe.

Mr Simon Browne *, a learned and pious clergyman of the laſt age, is perhaps the only perſon on record of whom there is reaſon to think, that he ſeriouſly diſ-

* See his affecting ſtory in the Adventurer, vol. 3. N° 88.

believed

believed the exiſtence of his own ſoul. He imagined, that in conſequence of an extraordinary interpoſition of divine power, his rational ſoul was gradually annihilated, and that nothing was now left him, but a principle of animal life, which he held in common with the brutes. But where-ever the ſtory of this excellent perſon is known, his unhappy miſtake will be imputed to madneſs, and to a depravation of intellect, as real, and as extraordinary, as if he had diſbelieved the exiſtence of his body, or the axioms of mathematics.

2. That the thinking principle, which we believe to be within us, continues the ſame through life, is equally ſelf-evident, and equally agreeable to the univerſal conſent of mankind. If a man were to ſpeak and act in the evening, as if he believed himſelf to have become a different perſon ſince the morning, the whole world would pronounce him in a ſtate of infanity. Were we to attempt to diſbelieve our own identity, we ſhould labour in vain; we could as eaſily bring ourſelves to believe, that it is poſſible for the ſame thing to be and not to be. But there is no reaſon to think, that this attempt was ever made

made by any man, not even by Mr HUME himſelf; though that author, in his Treatiſe of Human Nature, hath aſſerted, yea, and proved, (according to his notions of proof), that the human ſoul is perpetually changing; being nothing but "a bun-" dle of perceptions, that ſucceed each o-" ther with inconceivable rapidity, and " are (as he chuſes to expreſs it) in a per-" petual flux *." He might as eaſily, and as deciſively, with equal credit to his own underſtanding, and with equal advantage to the reader, by a method of reaſoning no leſs philoſophical, and with the ſame degree of diſcretion in the uſe of words, have attacked the axioms of mathematics, and produced a formal and ſerious confutation of them. In explaining the evidence on which we believe our own identity, it is not neceſſary, that I ſhould here examine his arguments againſt that belief: firſt, becauſe the point in queſtion is ſelf-evident, and therefore all reaſoning on the other ſide unphiloſophical and irrational; and, ſecondly, becauſe I ſhall afterwards prove, that ſome of Mr HUME's firſt

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 438. &c.

principles

principles are inconceivable and impoſſible; and that this very notion of his concerning identity, when fairly ſtated, is abſurd and ſelf-contradictory.

It has been aſked, how we can pretend to have full evidence of our identity, when of identity itſelf we are ſo far from having a diſtinct notion, that we cannot define it. It might with as good reaſon be aſked, how we come to believe that two and two are equal to four, or that a circle is different from a triangle, ſince we cannot define either equality or diverſity:—why we believe in our own exiſtence, ſince we cannot define exiſtence:—why, in a word, the vulgar believe any thing at all, ſince they know nothing about the rules of definition, and hardly ever attempt it. In fact, we have numberleſs ideas that admit not of definition, and yet concerning which we may argue, and believe, and know, with the utmoſt clearneſs and certainty. To define heat or cold, identity or diverſity, red or white, an ox or an aſs, would puzzle all the logicians on earth; yet nothing can be clearer, or more certain, than many of our judgements concerning thoſe objects. The rudeſt of the vulgar

know moſt perfectly what they mean, when they ſay, Three months ago I was at ſuch a town, and have ever ſince been at home: and the conviction they have of the truth of this propoſition is founded on the beſt of evidence, namely, on that of internal ſenſe; in which all men, by the law of their nature, do and muſt implicitly believe.

It has been aſked, whether this continued conſciouſneſs of our being always the ſame, does not conſtitute our ſameneſs or identity. No more, I ſhould anſwer, than our perception of truth, light, or cold, is the efficient cauſe of truth, light, or cold. Our identity is perceived by conſciouſneſs; but conſciouſneſs is as different from identity, as the underſtanding is different from truth, as paſt events are different from memory, as colours from the power of ſeeing. Conſciouſneſs of identity is ſo far from conſtituting identity, that it preſuppoſes it. An animal might continue the ſame being, and yet not be conſcious of its identity; which is probably the caſe with many of the brute creation; nay, which is often the caſe with man himſelf. When we ſleep without dreaming,

dreaming, or fall into a fainting fit *, or rave in a fever, and often too in our ordinary dreams, we loſe all ſenſe of our identity, and yet never conceive that our iden-

* The following caſe, which M. Crozaz gave in to the Academy of Sciences, is the moſt extraordinary inſtance of interrupted conſciouſneſs I have ever heard of. A nobleman of Lauſanne, as he was giving orders to a ſervant, ſuddenly loſt his ſpeech and all his ſenſes. Different remedies were tried without effect for ſix months; during all which time he appeared to be in a deep ſleep, or deliquium, with various ſymptoms at different periods, which are particularly ſpecified in the narration. At laſt, after ſome chirurgical operations, at the end of ſix months his ſpeech and ſenſes returned. When he recovered, the ſame ſervant to whom he had been giving orders when he was firſt affected, happening to be in the room, he went on with giving his directions juſt where he had left off, forgetting only the time that had elapſed during his illneſs, and connecting the latter part of the ſentence with the former part, which had been pronounced half a year before, juſt as if no time had intervened. He lived ten years after, and died of another diſtemper. Van Swieten relates this ſtory in his commentaries on Boerhaave's aphoriſms, under the head *Apoplexy*. I mention it chiefly with a view to the reader's amuſement; he may conſider the evidence, and then believe or diſbelieve as he pleaſes. But that conſciouſneſs may be interrupted by a total deliquium, without any change in our notions of our own identity, I know by my own experience. I am therefore fully perſuaded, that the identity of this ſubſtance, which I call my ſoul, may continue even when I am unconſcious of it; and if for a ſhorter ſpace, why not for a longer?

tity has ſuffered any interruption or change: the moment we awake or recover, we are conſcious that we are the ſame individual beings we were before.

Many doubts and difficulties have been ſtarted about our manner of conceiving identity of perſon under a change of ſubſtance. Plutarch tells us, that in the time of Demetrius Phalereus, the Athenians ſtill preſerved the cuſtom of ſending every year to Delos the ſame galley which, about a thouſand years before, had brought Theſeus and his company from Crete; and that it then uſed to be a queſtion in the ſchools, how this could be the ſame veſſel, when every part of its materials had been changed oftener than once *. It is aſked, how a tree can be accounted the ſame, when, from a plant of an inch long, it has grown to the height of fifty feet; and how identity can be aſcribed to the human body, ſince its parts are continually changing, ſo that not one particle of the body I now have, belonged to the body I had twenty years ago.

It were well, if metaphyſicians would

* Plutarch. in Theſeo. Plato, in Phædone.

think

think more and ſpeak leſs on theſe ſubjects: they would then find, that the difficulties ſo much complained of are rather verbal than real. Was there a ſingle Athenian, who did not know in what reſpects the galley of Theſeus continued the ſame, and in what reſpects it was changed? It was the ſame in reſpect of its name, its deſtination, its ſhape perhaps, and ſize, and ſome other particulars; in reſpect of its ſubſtance, it was altogether different. And when one party in the ſchools maintained, that it was the ſame, and the other, that it was not the ſame, all the difference between them was this, that the one uſed the word *ſame* in one ſenſe, and the other in another.

The identity of vegetables is as eaſily conceived. No man imagines, that the plant of an inch long is the ſame in ſubſtance with the tree of fifty feet. The latter is by the vulgar ſuppoſed to retain all the ſubſtance of the former, but with the addition of an immenſe quantity of adventitious matter. Thus far, and no farther, do they ſuppoſe the ſubſtance of the tree to continue the ſame. They call it, however, the ſame tree; and the ſame

it

it is, in many reſpects, which to every perſon of common ſenſe are obvious enough, though not eaſily expreſſed in unexceptionable language.

Of the changes made in the human body by attrition, the vulgar have no notion. They believe the ſubſtance of a full-grown body to continue the ſame, notwithſtanding its being ſometimes fatter and ſometimes leaner; even as they ſuppoſe the ſubſtance of a wall to be the ſame before and after it is plaiſtered. They therefore do not aſcribe to it identity of perſon and diverſity of ſubſtance, but a real and proper identity both of ſubſtance and perſon. Of the identity of the body while increaſing in ſtature, they conceive, nearly in the ſame way, as of the identity of vegetables: they know in what reſpects it continues the ſame, and in what reſpects it becomes different; there is no confuſion in their notions; they never ſuppoſe it to be different in thoſe reſpects in which they know it to be the ſame.

When philoſophers ſpeak of the identity of the human body, they muſt mean, not that its ſubſtance is the ſame, for this they

they ſay is perpetually changing; but that it is the ſame, in reſpect of its having been all along animated with the ſame vital and thinking principle, diſtinguiſhed by the ſame name, marked with the ſame or ſimilar features, placed in the ſame relations of life, &c.—It muſt be obvious to the intelligent reader, that the difficulties attending this ſubject ariſe not from any ambiguity or intricacy in our notions or judgements, for theſe are extremely clear, but from our way of expreſſing them: the particulars in which an object continues the ſame, are often ſo blended with thoſe in which it has become different, that we cannot find proper words for marking the diſtinction, and therefore muſt have recourſe to tedious and obſcure circumlocutions.

But whatever judgements we form of the identity of corporeal objects, we cannot from them draw any inference concerning the identity of our mind. We cannot aſcribe extenſion or ſolidity to the ſoul, far leſs any increaſe or diminution of ſolid or extended parts. Here, therefore, there is no ground for diſtinguiſhing diverſity of ſubſtance from identity of perſon.

ſon. Our ſoul is the very ſame being now it was yeſterday, laſt year, twenty years ago. This is a dictate of common ſenſe, an intuitive truth, which all mankind, by the law of their nature, do and muſt believe, and the contrary of which is inconceivable. We have perhaps changed many of our principles; we may have acquired many new ideas and notions, and loſt many of thoſe we once had; but that the ſubſtance, eſſence, or perſonality, of the ſoul, has ſuffered any change, increaſe, or diminution, we never have ſuppoſed, nor can ſuppoſe. New faculties have perhaps appeared, with which we were formerly unacquainted; but theſe we cannot conceive to have affected the identity of the ſoul, any more than learning to write, or to play on a muſical inſtrument, is conceived to affect the identity of the hand; or than the perception of harmony the firſt time one hears muſic, is conceived to affect the identity of the ear.

But if we perceive our identity by conſciouſneſs, and if the acts of conſciouſneſs by which we perceive it be interrupted, how can we know that our identity is not interrupted?

interrupted? I anſwer, The law of our nature determines us, whether we will or not, to believe that we continue the ſame thinking beings. The interruption of conſciouſneſs, whether more or leſs frequent, makes no change in this belief. My perception of the viſible creation is every moment interrupted by the winking of my eyes. Am I therefore to believe, that the viſible univerſe, which I this moment perceive, is not the ſame with the viſible univerſe I perceived laſt moment? Then muſt I alſo believe, that the exiſtence of the univerſe depends on the motion of my eye-lids; and that the muſcles which move them have the power of creating and annihilating worlds.

To conclude: That our ſoul exiſts, and continues through life the ſame individual being, is a dictate of common ſenſe; a truth which the law of our nature renders it impoſſible for us to diſbelieve; and in regard to which, we cannot ſuppoſe ourſelves in an error, without ſuppoſing our faculties fallacious, and conſequently diſclaiming all conviction, and all certainty, and diſavowing the diſtinction between truth and falſehood.

SECT. IV.

Of the evidence of Memory.

THE evidence of memory commands our belief as effectually as the evidence of ſenſe. I cannot poſſibly doubt, with regard to any of my tranſactions of yeſterday which I now remember, whether I performed them or not. That I dined to-day, and was in bed laſt night, is as certain to me, as that I at preſent ſee the colour of this paper. If we had no memory, knowledge and experience would be impoſſible; and if we had any tendency to diſtruſt our memory, knowledge and experience would be of as little uſe in directing our conduct and ſentiments, as our dreams now are. Sometimes we doubt, whether in a particular caſe we exert memory or imagination; and our belief is ſuſpended accordingly: but no ſooner do we become conſcious, that we *remember*, than conviction inſtantly takes place; we ſay, I am certain it was ſo, for now I remember I was an eye-witneſs.

But who is it that teacheth the child to believe,

believe, that yeſterday he was puniſhed, becauſe he remembers to have been puniſhed yeſterday? Or, by what argument will you convince him, that, notwithſtanding his remembrance, he ought not to believe that he was puniſhed yeſterday, becauſe memory is fallacious? The matter depends not on education or reaſoning. We truſt to the evidence of memory, becauſe we cannot help truſting to it. The ſame Providence which endued us with memory, without any care of ours, endued us alſo with an inſtinctive propenſity to believe in it, previouſly to all reaſoning and experience. Nay, all reaſoning ſuppoſeth the teſtimony of memory to be authentic: for, without truſting implicitly to this teſtimony, no train of reaſoning could be proſecuted; we could never be convinced, that the concluſion is fair, if we did not *remember* the ſeveral ſteps of the argument, and if we were not certain that this remembrance is not fallacious.

The diverſities of memory in different men are very remarkable; and in the ſame man the remembrance of ſome things is more laſting, and more lively, than that

of others. Some of the ideas of memory ſeem to decay gradually by length of time; ſo that there may be ſome things which I diſtinctly remembered ſeven years ago, but which at preſent I remember very imperfectly, and which in ſeven years more (if I live ſo long) I ſhall have utterly forgotten. Hence ſome have been led to think, that the evidence of memory decays gradually, from abſolute certainty, through all the degrees of probability, down to that ſuſpenſe of judgement which we call *doubt*. They ſeem to have imagined, that the vivacity of the idea is in ſome ſort neceſſary to the eſtabliſhment of belief. Nay, one author * has gone ſo far as to ſay, that belief is nothing elſe but this vivacity of ideas; as if we never believed what we have no lively conception of, nor doubted of any thing of which we have a lively conception. But this doctrine is ſo abſurd, that it hardly deſerves a ſerious confutation. I have a much more lively idea of Don Quixote than of the preſent King of Pruſſia; and yet I believe that the latter does exiſt, and that the former never did.

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 172.

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When I was a ſchoolboy, I read an abridgement of the hiſtory of Robinſon Cruſoe, and firmly believed every word of it; ſince I grew up, I have read that ingenious work at large, and conſequently have a much livelier conception of it than before; yet now I believe the whole to be a fiction. Some months ago, I read *the Treatiſe of Human Nature*, and have at preſent a pretty clear remembrance of its contents; but I ſhall probably forget the greater part of it in a ſhort time. When this happens, I ought not, according to Mr HUME's theory, to believe that I ever read it. As long, however, as my faculties remain unimpaired, I fear I ſhall hardly be able to bring myſelf to this pitch of ſcepticiſm. No, no; I ſhall ever have good reaſon to remember I read that book, however imperfect my remembrance may be, and however little ground I may have to congratulate myſelf upon my acquaintance with it.

The vivacity of a perception does not ſeem neceſſary to our belief of the exiſtence of the object perceived. I ſee a town afar off; its viſible magnitude is not more than an inch ſquare, and conſequently

quently my perception of it is neither lively nor diſtinct; and yet I as firmly believe that town to exiſt, as if I were in the centre of it. I ſee an object in motion on the top of yonder hill; I cannot diſcern whether it be a man, or a horſe, or both; I therefore exert no belief in regard to the claſs or ſpecies of objects to which it belongs, but I believe with as much aſſurance that it exiſts, as if I ſaw it diſtinctly in all its parts and dimenſions. We have never any doubt of the exiſtence of an object ſo long as we are ſure that we perceive it by our ſenſes, whether the perception be ſtrong or weak, diſtinct or confuſed; but whenever we begin to doubt, whether the object be perceived by our ſenſes, or whether we only imagine that we perceive it, then we likewiſe begin to doubt of its exiſtence.

Theſe obſervations are applicable to memory. I ſaw a certain object ſome years ago; my remembrance of it is leſs diſtinct now than it was the day after I ſaw it; but I believe the evidence of my memory as much at preſent as I did then, in regard to all the parts of it which I now am conſcious that I remember. Let a paſt e-

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vent be ever ſo remote in time, if I am conſcious that I remember it, I ſtill believe, with equal aſſurance, that this event did once take place: for what is memory, but a conſciouſneſs of our having formerly done or perceived ſomething? And if it be true, that ſomething is perceived or done at this preſent moment, it will always be true, that at this moment that thing was perceived or done. The evidence of memory does not decay in proportion as the ideas of memory become leſs lively; as long as we are conſcious that we *remember*, ſo long will the evidence attending that remembrance produce abſolute certainty; and abſolute certainty admits not of degrees. Indeed, as was already obſerved, when remembrance becomes ſo obſcure, that we are at a loſs to determine whether we *remember* or only *imagine* an event, in this caſe belief will be ſuſpended till we become certain whether we remember or not; whenever we become certain that we do remember, conviction inſtantly ariſeth.

Some have ſuppoſed, that the evidence of memory is liable to become ambiguous, becauſe we are not well enough acquaint-

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ed with the difference between memory and imagination, to be able at all times to determine with certainty, whether the one or the other be exerted in regard to the events or facts we may have occaſion to contemplate. "You ſay, that while "you only imagine an event, you neither "believe nor diſbelieve the exiſtence or "reality of it; but that as ſoon as you "become conſcious that you remem-"ber an event, you inſtantly believe it "to have been real. You muſt then "know with certainty the difference be-"tween memory and imagination, and be "able to tell by what marks you diſtin-"guiſh the operations of the former from "thoſe of the latter. If you cannot do "this, you may miſtake the one for the "other, and think that you *imagine* when "you really *remember*, and that you *re-*"*member* when you only *imagine*. That "belief, therefore, muſt be very preca-"rious and ambiguous, which is built "upon the evidence of memory, ſince this "evidence is ſo apt to be confounded "with the viſionary exhibitions of imagi-"nation, which, by your own acknow-"ledgement, can never conſtitute a foun-

"dation

" dation for true rational belief." This is an objection according to the metaphyſical mode, which, without conſulting experience, is ſatisfied if we can put together a few plauſible words in the form of an argument: but this objection will have no credit with thoſe who acknowledge ultimate inſtinctive principles of conviction, and who have more faith in their own feelings than in the ſubtleties of logic.

It is certain the vulgar are not able to give a ſatisfying account of the difference between memory and imagination; even philoſophers have not been ſo ſucceſsful as could have been wiſhed, in their attempts to illuſtrate this point. Mr HUME tells us, that ideas of memory are diſtinguiſhed from thoſe of imagination by the ſuperior vivacity of the former *. This may ſometimes, but cannot always, be true: for ideas of imagination are oft miſtaken for objects of ſenſe; ideas of memory never. The former, therefore, muſt often be more lively than the latter; for, according to Mr HUME's own account,

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 153.

all ideas are weaker than impreſſions *. Dreaming perſons, lunatics, ſtage-players, enthuſiaſts, and all who are agitated by fear, or other violent paſſions, are apt to miſtake ideas of imagination for real things, and the perception of thoſe ideas for real ſenſation. And the ſame thing is often experienced by perſons of ſtrong fancy, and great ſenſibility of temper, at a time when they are not troubled with any temporary fits of irrationality or violent paſſion.

But whatever difficulty we may find in defining or deſcribing memory, ſo as to diſtinguiſh it from imagination, we are never at any loſs about our own meaning, when we ſpeak of remembering and of imagining. We all know what it is to remember, and what it is to imagine: a retroſpect to former experience always attends the exertions of memory, but thoſe of imagination are not attended with any ſuch retroſpect. I remember to have ſeen a lion, and I can imagine an elephant or centaur which I have never ſeen. Every body who uſes theſe words knows very

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 41.

well

well what they mean, whether he be able to explain his meaning by other words or not. The truth is, that when we remember, we generally know that we remember; when we imagine, we generally know that we imagine: ſuch is our conſtitution. We therefore do not ſuppoſe the evidence of memory ambiguous, although we may be at a loſs to explain the difference between that faculty and imagination: this difference is perfectly known to every man by experience, tho' perhaps no man can fully expreſs it in words. There are many things very familiar to us, which we have no words to expreſs. I cannot deſcribe or define, either a red colour, which I know to be a ſimple object, or a white colour, which I know to be a compoſition of ſeven colours: but will any one hence infer, that I am ignorant of their difference, ſo as not to know, when I look on ermine, whether it be white or red? Let it not then be ſaid, that becauſe I cannot define memory and imagination, therefore I am ignorant of their difference: I, and every perſon of a ſound mind, know their difference, and can with certainty determine, when it is

that we exert the one, and when it is that we exert the other.

SECT. V.

Of Reaſoning from the Effect to the Cauſe.

I Left my chamber an hour ago, and now at my return find a book on my table, the ſize, and binding, and contents of which are ſo remarkable, that I am certain it was not here when I went out, and that I never ſaw it before. I aſk, who brought this book; and am told, that no body has entered my apartment ſince I left it. That, ſay I, is impoſſible. I make a more particular inquiry; and a ſervant, in whoſe veracity I can confide, aſſures me, that he has had his eye on my chamber-door the whole day, and that no perſon has entered it but myſelf only. Then, ſay I, the perſon who brought this book muſt have come in by the window or the chimney; for it is impoſſible that this book could have come hither of itſelf. The ſervant bids me remember, that my chimney

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is too narrow to admit any human creature, and that the window is ſecured on the inſide in ſuch a manner that it cannot be opened from without. I examine the walls; it is evident no breach has been made; and there is but one door to the apartment. What ſhall I think? If the ſervant's report be true, and if the book have not been brought by any viſible agent, it muſt have come in a miraculous manner, by the interpoſition of ſome inviſible cauſe; for ſtill I muſt repeat, that without ſome cauſe it could not poſſibly have come hither.

Let the reader conſider the caſe, and deliberate with himſelf whether I have thought irrationally on this occaſion, or expreſſed myſelf too ſtrongly, when I ſpoke of the impoſſibility of a book appearing in my chamber without ſome cauſe of its appearance, either viſible or inviſible. I would not willingly refer ſuch a phenomenon to a miracle; but ſtill a miracle is poſſible; whereas it is abſolutely impoſſible that this could have happened without a cauſe; at leaſt it ſeems to me to be as impoſſible, as that a part ſhould be greater than the whole, or that things equal to one and

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the ſame thing ſhould be unequal to one another. And I preſume the reader will be of my opinion; for, in all my intercourſe with others, and after a careful examination of my own mind, I have never found any reaſon to think, that it is poſſible for a human, or for a rational creature, to conceive a thing beginning to exiſt, and proceeding from no cauſe.

I pronounce it therefore to be an axiom, clear, certain, and undeniable, That "whatever beginneth to exiſt, proceedeth from "ſome cauſe." I cannot bring myſelf to think, that the reverſe of any geometrical axiom is more abſurd than the reverſe of this; and therefore I am as certain of the truth of this, as I can be of the truth of the other; and cannot, without contradicting myſelf, and doing violence to my nature, even attempt to believe otherwiſe.

Whether this maxim be intuitive or demonſtrable, may perhaps admit of ſome diſpute; but the determination of that point will not in the leaſt affect the truth of the maxim. If it be demonſtrable, we can then aſſign a reaſon for our belief of it; if it be intuitive, it is on the ſame footing with other intuitive axioms; that is,

is, we believe it, becauſe the law of our nature renders it impoſſible for us to diſbelieve it.

In proof of this maxim, it hath been ſaid, that nothing can produce itſelf. But this truth is not more evident than the truth to be proved, and therefore is no rational proof at all. Nay, this laſt propoſition ſeems to be only a different and leſs proper way of expreſſing the ſame thing. Nothing can produce itſelf;—that is, every thing produced muſt be produced by ſome other thing;—that is, every effect muſt proceed from a cauſe;—and that is, (for all effects being poſterior to their cauſes, muſt neceſſarily have a beginning), every thing beginning to exiſt proceedeth from ſome cauſe. Other arguments have been offered in proof of this maxim, which I think are ſufficiently confuted by Mr HUME, in his Treatiſe of Human Nature *. This maxim therefore he affirms, and I allow, to be not demonſtrably certain. But he further affirms, that it is not intuitively certain; in which I cannot agree with him. "All certainty,"

* Book 1. part 3. ſect. 3.

ſays

ſays he, " ariſes from the compariſon of i-
" deas, and from the diſcovery of ſuch
" relations as are unalterable ſo long as the
" ideas continue the ſame: but the only
" relations of this kind are reſemblance,
" proportion in quantity and number,
" degrees of any quality, and contra-
" riety; none of which is implied in the
" maxim, *Whatever begins to exiſt, pro-*
" *ceeds from ſome cauſe:* — that maxim
" therefore is not intuitively certain."—
This argument, if it prove any thing at all, would prove, that the maxim is not even certain; for we are here told, that it has not that character or quality from which all certainty ariſeth.

But, if I miſtake not, both the premiſes of this ſyllogiſm are falſe. In the firſt place, I cannot admit, that all certainty ariſes from a compariſon of ideas. I am certain of the exiſtence of myſelf, and of the other things that affect my ſenſes; I am certain, that " whatever is, is;" and yet I cannot conceive, that any compariſon of ideas is neceſſary to produce theſe convictions in my mind. Perhaps I cannot long ſpeak of them, without uſing words expreſſive of relation; but the ſimple

ple act or perception of the underſtanding by which I am conſcious of them, implies no compariſon that I can diſcover. If it did, then the ſimpleſt intuitive truth requires proof, or illuſtration at leaſt, before it can be acknowledged as truth by the mind; which I preſume will not be found warranted by experience. Whether others are conſcious of making ſuch a compariſon, before they yield aſſent to the ſimpleſt intuitive truth, I know not; but this I know, that my mind is often conſcious of certainty where no ſuch compariſon has been made by me.

Secondly, I apprehend, that Mr HUME has not enumerated all the relations which, when diſcovered, give riſe to certainty. I am certain, that I am the ſame perſon today I was yeſterday. Mr HUME indeed will not allow that this is poſſible *. I cannot help it; I am certain notwithſtanding; and I flatter myſelf, that I have on my ſide, not only the majority, but the whole of mankind, Mr HUME himſelf (if he would ſpeak his real mind) not excepted. I ſay then, I am certain, that I

* See part 2. chap. 2 ſect 1. of this Eſſay.

am the ſame perſon to-day I was yeſterday. Now, the relation expreſſed in this propoſition is not reſemblance, nor proportion in quantity and number, nor degrees of any common quality, nor contrariety: it is a relation different from all theſe; it is identity or ſameneſs.

Again, that the foregoing maxim is neither intuitively nor demonſtrably certain, our author attempts to prove from this conſideration, that we cannot demonſtrate the impoſſibility of the contrary. Nay, the contrary, he ſays, is not inconceivable: "for we can conceive an object non-"exiſtent this moment, and exiſtent the "next, without joining it to the idea of "a cauſe, which is an idea altogether diſ-"tinct and different." But this I preſume is not a fair ſtate of the caſe. Can we conceive a thing beginning to exiſt, and yet bring ourſelves to think that a cauſe is not neceſſary to the production of ſuch a thing? If we cannot, (I am ſure I cannot), then is the contrary of this maxim, when fairly ſtated, found to be truly and properly inconceivable.

But whether the contrary of this maxim be inconceivable or not, the maxim itſelf may

may be intuitively certain. Of intuitive, as well as of demonſtrable truths, there are different kinds. It is a character of ſome, that their contraries are inconceivable: ſuch are the axioms of geometry. But of other intuitive truths, the contraries are conceivable. "I do feel a hard "body;"—"I do not feel a hard body;"—theſe propoſitions are equally conceivable: the firſt is true, for I have a pen between my fingers; but I cannot prove its truth by argument; therefore its truth is perceived intuitively.

Thus far we have argued for the ſake of argument, and oppoſed metaphyſic to metaphyſic *, in order to prove, that our author's reaſoning on the preſent ſubject is not concluſive. It is now time to enter into the merits of the cauſe, and conſider the matter philoſophically, that is, according to fact and experience. And in this way we bring it to a very ſhort iſſue. The point in diſpute is, Whether this maxim, "Whatever beginneth to exiſt, proceedeth "from ſome cauſe," be intuitively certain, or not? That the mind naturally

* See part 3. ſect. 3. of this Eſſay.

and neceſſarily aſſents to it without any doubt, I have already ſhown; the maxim, therefore, is certainly true. That it cannot, by any argument, or medium of proof, be rendered more evident than it is when firſt apprehended by the mind, is alſo certain; for it is of itſelf as evident as any propoſition that can be urged in proof of it. If, therefore, this maxim be true, (as every rational being feels, and acknowledges), it is a principle of common ſenſe: we believe it, not becauſe we can give a reaſon, but becauſe, by the law of our nature, we muſt believe it.

Our opinion of the neceſſity of a cauſe to the production of every thing which hath a beginning, is by Mr HUME ſuppoſed to ariſe from obſervation and experience. It is true, that in our experience we have never found any thing beginning to exiſt, and proceeding from no cauſe; but I imagine it will not be found, that our belief of this axiom is founded on experience. For let it be remarked, that ſome children, at a time when their experience is very ſcanty, ſeem to be as ſenſible of the truth of this axiom, as many perſons arrived at maturity. I do not mean,

mean, that they ever repeat it in the form of a propoſition; or that, if they were to hear it repeated in that form, they would inſtantly declare their aſſent to it; for a propoſition can never be rationally aſſented to, except by thoſe who underſtand the meaning of the words that compoſe it: but I mean, that theſe children have a natural propenſity to inquire after the cauſe of any effect or event that engages their attention; which they would not do, if the view of an event or effect did not ſuggeſt to them, that a cauſe is neceſſary to its production. Their curioſity in aſking the reaſons and cauſes of every thing they ſee and hear, is often very remarkable, and riſes even to impertinence; at leaſt it is called ſo when one is not prepared to give them an anſwer. I have known a child to break open his drum, to ſee if he could diſcover the cauſe of its extraordinary ſound; and that at the hazard of rendering the plaything unſerviceable, and of being puniſhed for his indiſcretion. If the ardor of this curioſity were always proportioned to the extent of a child's experience, or to the care his teachers have taken to make him attentive to the dependence

pendence of effects on cauſes, we might then aſcribe it to the power of education, or to a habit contracted by experience. But every one who has had an opportunity of converſing with children, knows that this is not the caſe; and that their curioſity cannot otherwiſe be accounted for, than by ſuppoſing it inſtinctive, and, like all other inſtincts, ſtronger in ſome minds, and weaker in others, independently on experience and education, and in conſequence of the appointment of that Being who hath been pleaſed to make one man differ from another in his intellectual accompliſhments, as well as in his features, complexion, and ſize. Nor let it be imagined, becauſe ſome children are in this reſpect more curious than others, that therefore the belief of this maxim is inſtinctive in ſome minds only: the maxim may be equally believed by all, notwithſtanding this diverſity. For do we not find a ſimilar diverſity in the genius of different men? Some men have a philoſophical turn of mind, and love to inveſtigate cauſes, and to have a reaſon ready on every occaſion; others are perfectly indifferent as to theſe matters, being wholly ingroſſed

ingroſſed by ſtudies of another kind. And yet I preſume it will be found, that the truth of this maxim is felt by every man, though perhaps many men never thought of putting it in words in the form of a propoſition.

We repeat, therefore, that this axiom is one of the principles of common ſenſe, which every rational mind does and muſt acknowledge to be true; not becauſe it can be proved, but becauſe the law of nature determines us to believe it without proof, and to look upon its contrary as perfectly abſurd, impoſſible, and inconceivable.

The axiom now before us is the foundation of the moſt important argument that ever employed human reaſon; I mean that which, from the works that are created, evinces the eternal power and godhead of the Creator. This argument, as far as it reſolves itſelf into this axiom, is properly a demonſtration, being a clear deduction from a ſelf-evident principle; and therefore no man can pretend to underſtand this argument without feeling it to be concluſive. So that what the Pſalmiſt ſays of the atheiſt is literally true, *He is a fool*; as really

really irrational as if he refuſed to be convinced by a mathematical demonſtration. Nay, he is more irrational; becauſe there is no truth demonſtrated in mathematics which ſo many powers of our nature conſpire to ratify, and with which the minds of the whole rational creation are ſo deeply impreſſed. The contemplation of the Divine Nature is the moſt uſeful and the moſt ennobling exerciſe in which our faculties can be engaged, and recommends itſelf to every man of ſound judgement and good taſte, as the moſt durable and moſt perfect enjoyment that can poſſibly fall to the ſhare of any created being. Sceptics may wrangle, and mockers may blaſpheme; but the pious man knows by evidence too ſublime for their comprehenſion, that his affections are not miſplaced, and that his hopes ſhall not be diſappointed; by evidence which, to every ſound mind, is fully ſatisfactory; but which, to the humble and tender-hearted, is altogether overwhelming, irreſiſtible, and divine.

That many of the objects in nature have had a beginning, is obvious to our own ſenſes and memory, or confirmed by unqueſtionable

queſtionable teſtimony: theſe, therefore, according to the axiom we are here conſidering, muſt be believed to have proceeded from a cauſe adequate at leaſt to the effects produced. That the whole ſenſible univerſe hath to us the appearance of an effect, of ſomething which once was not, and which exiſts not by any neceſſity of nature, but by the arbitrary appointment of ſome powerful and intelligent cauſe different from and independent on it; that the univerſe, I ſay, has this appearance, cannot be denied: and that it is, what it appears to be, an effect, that it had a beginning, and was not from eternity, is proved by every ſpecies of evidence the ſubject will admit. And if ſo, we offer violence to our underſtanding, when we attempt to believe that the whole univerſe does not proceed from ſome cauſe; and we argue unphiloſophically and irrationally, when we endeavour to diſprove this natural and univerſal ſuggeſtion of the human mind.

It is true, the univerſe is, as one may ſay, a work *ſui generis*, altogether ſingular, and ſuch as we cannot properly compare to other works; becauſe indeed all works

are comprehended in it. But that natural dictate of the mind by which we believe the univerſe to have proceeded from a cauſe, ariſes from our conſidering it as an effect; a circumſtance in which it is perfectly ſimilar to all works whatſoever. The ſingularity of the effect rather confirms (if that be poſſible) than weakens our belief of the neceſſity of a cauſe; at leaſt it makes us more attentive to the cauſe, and intereſts us more deeply in it. What is the univerſe, but a vaſt ſyſtem of works or effects, ſome of them great and others ſmall, ſome more, and ſome leſs conſiderable? If each of theſe works, the leaſt as well as the greateſt, require a cauſe for its production; is it not in the higheſt degree abſurd and unnatural to ſay, that the whole is not the effect of a cauſe?—Each link of a great chain muſt be ſupported by ſomething, but the whole chain may be ſupported by nothing!—nothing leſs than an ounce can be a counterpoiſe to an ounce, nothing leſs than a pound to a pound; but the wing of a gnat, or nothing at all, may be a ſufficient counterpoiſe to ten hundred thouſand pounds:

—are

—are not theſe aſſertions too abſurd to deſerve an anſwer?

The reader, if he happens to be acquainted with Mr HUME's *Eſſay on a particular providence and a future ſtate*, will ſee, that theſe remarks are intended as an anſwer to a very ſtrange argument there advanced againſt the belief of a Deity. "The "univerſe," we are told, "is an object quite "ſingular and unparallelled; no other ob"ject that has fallen under our obſerva"tion bears any ſimilarity to it; neither "it nor its cauſe can be comprehended un"der any known ſpecies; and therefore "we can form no rational concluſion at "all concerning the cauſe of the univerſe." —I appeal to any man of ſound judgement, whether that ſuggeſtion of his underſtanding, which diſpoſeth him to infer a cauſe from an effect, has any dependence upon a prior operation of his mind, by which the effect in queſtion is referred to its genus or ſpecies. When he pronounces concerning any object which he conceives to have had a beginning, that it muſt have proceeded from ſome cauſe, does this judgement neceſſarily imply any compariſon of that object with others of a

like kind? If the new object were in every reſpect unlike to other objects, would this have any influence on his judgement? Would he not acknowledge a cauſe to be as neceſſary for the production of the moſt uncommon, as of the moſt familiar object? — If therefore I believe, that I myſelf owe my exiſtence to ſome cauſe, becauſe there is ſomething in my mind which neceſſarily determines me to this belief, I muſt alſo, for the very ſame reaſon, believe, that the whole univerſe (ſuppoſed to have had a beginning) proceeds from ſome cauſe. The evidence of both is the ſame. If I believe the firſt and not the ſecond, I believe and diſbelieve the ſame evidence at the ſame time; I believe that the very ſame ſuggeſtion of my underſtanding is both true and falſe.

Though I were to grant, that, when an object is reducible to no known genus, no rational inference can be made concerning its cauſe; yet it will not follow, that our inferences concerning the cauſe of the univerſe are irrational, ſuppoſing it reaſonable to believe that the univerſe had a beginning. If there be in the univerſe any thing which is reducible to no known genus,

genus, let it be mentioned: if there be any preſumption for the exiſtence of ſuch a thing, let the foundation of that preſumption be explained. And, if you pleaſe, I ſhall, for argument's ſake, admit, that concerning the cauſe of that particular thing, no rational concluſion can be formed. But it has never been aſſerted, that the exiſtence of ſuch a thing is either real or probable. Mr HUME only aſſerts, that the univerſe itſelf, not any particular thing in the univerſe, is reducible to no known genus. Well then, let me aſk again, What is the univerſe? A word? No; it is a vaſt collection of things.—Are all theſe things reducible to genera? Mr HUME does not deny it.—Each of theſe things, then, if it had a beginning, muſt alſo have had a cauſe? It muſt.—What thing in the univerſe exiſts uncauſed? Nothing.—Is this a rational concluſion? So it ſeems.—It ſeems, then, that though it be rational to aſſign a cauſe to every thing in the univerſe; yet to aſſign a cauſe to the univerſe is not rational! It is ſhameful thus to trifle with words.—In fact, this argument of Mr HUME's, ſo highly admired by its author, is no argument

ment at all. It is founded on a diſtinction that is perfectly inconceivable. Twenty ſhillings laid on a table make a pound: though you take up theſe twenty ſhillings, yet have you not taken up the pound; you have only taken up twenty ſhillings. If the reader cannot enter into this diſtinction, he will never be able to conceive in what the force of Mr HUME's argument conſiſts.

If the univerſe had a beginning, it muſt have had a cauſe. This is a ſelf-evident axiom, or at leaſt an undeniable conſequence of one. We neceſſarily aſſent to it; ſuch is the law of our nature. If we deny it, we cannot, without abſurdity, believe any thing elſe whatſoever; becauſe we at the ſame time deny the authenticity of thoſe inſtinctive ſuggeſtions which are the foundation of all truth. The Atheiſt will never be able to elude the force of this argument, till he can prove, that every thing in nature exiſts neceſſarily, independently, and from eternity.

If Mr HUME's argument be found to turn to ſo little account, from the ſimple conſideration of the univerſe, as exiſting, and as having had a beginning, it will appear

pear (if poſſible) ſtill more irrational, when we take a view of the univerſe, and its parts, as of works curiouſly adapted to certain ends. Their exiſtence diſplays the neceſſity of a powerful cauſe; their frame proves the cauſe to be intelligent, good, and wiſe. The meaneſt of the works of nature, (if any of Nature's works may be called mean), — the arrangement neceſſary for the production of the ſmalleſt plant, requires in the cauſe a degree of power, intelligence, and wiſdom, which infinitely tranſcends the ſublimeſt exertions of human ability. What then ſhall we ſay of the cauſe that produces an animal, a rational ſoul, a world, a ſyſtem of worlds, an univerſe? Shall we ſay, that infinite power and wiſdom are not neceſſary attributes of that univerſal cauſe, though they be neceſſary attributes of the cauſe that produces a plant? Shall we ſay, that the maker of a plant may be acknowledged to be powerful, intelligent, and wiſe, becauſe there are many other things in nature that reſemble a plant; but that we cannot rationally acknowledge the maker of the univerſe to be wiſe, powerful, or intelligent, becauſe there is nothing which the univerſe

verſe reſembles, or to which it may be compared? Can the man who argues in this manner have any meaning to his words?

For an anſwer to the other cavils thrown out by Mr HUME, in this flimſy eſſay, againſt the divine attributes, the reader is referred to the firſt part of Butler's Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion. It needs not be matter of any ſurpriſe, that we name, on this occaſion, a book which was publiſhed before Mr HUME's eſſay was written. With infidel writers it has long been the faſhion (leſs frequently indeed with this author than with many others) to deliver as their own, and as entirely new, objections againſt religion, which have been repeatedly and unanſwerably confuted. This piece of craft gives no offence to their diſciples; theſe gentlemen, if they read at all, generally chuſing to confine their inquiries to one ſide of the controverſy: to themſelves it is a conſiderable ſaving in the articles of time and invention.

SECT.

SECT. VI.

Of Probable or Experimental Reaſoning.

IN all our reaſonings from the cauſe to the effect, we proceed on a ſuppoſition, and a belief, that the courſe of nature will continue to be in time to come what we experience it to be at preſent, and remember it to have been in time paſt. This preſumption of continuance is the foundation of all our judgements concerning future events; and this, in many caſes, determines our conviction as effectually as any proof or demonſtration whatſoever; although the conviction it produceth be different in kind from what is produced by ſtrict demonſtration, as well as from thoſe kinds of conviction which attend the evidence of ſenſe, memory, and abſtract intuition. The higheſt degree of conviction in reaſoning from cauſes to effects, is called *moral certainty*; and the inferior degrees reſult from that ſpecies of evidence which is called *probability* or *veriſimilitude*.

militude. That all men will die; that the ſun will riſe to-morrow, and the ſea ebb and flow; that ſleep will continue to refreſh, and food to nouriſh us; that the ſame articulate ſounds which to-day communicate the ideas of virtue and vice, meat and drink, man and beaſt, will to-morrow communicate the ſame ideas to the ſame perſons; no man can doubt, without being accounted a fool. In theſe, and in all other inſtances where our experience of the paſt has been equally extenſive and uniform, our judgement concerning the future amounts to moral certainty: we believe, with full aſſurance, or at leaſt without doubt, that the ſame laws of nature which have hitherto operated, will continue to operate as long as we foreſee no cauſe to interrupt or hinder their operation.

But no perſon who attends to his own mind will ſay, that in theſe caſes our belief, or conviction, or aſſurance, is influenced by a proof, or by any thing like it. If reaſoning be at all employed, it is only in order to give us a clear view of our paſt experience with regard to the point in queſtion. When this view is obtained,

tained, reaſoning is no longer neceſſary; the mind, by its own innate force, and in conſequence of an irreſiſtible and inſtinctive impulſe, infers the future from the paſt, immediately, and without the intervention of any argument. The ſea has ebbed and flowed twice every day in time paſt; therefore the ſea will continue to ebb and flow twice every day in the time to come,—is by no means a logical deduction of a concluſion from premiſes *.

When our experience of the paſt hath not been uniform nor extenſive, our opinion with regard to the future falls ſhort of moral certainty; and amounts only to a greater or leſs degree of perſuaſion, according to the greater or ſmaller proportion of favourable inſtances: we ſay, ſuch an event will probably happen, ſuch another is wholly improbable. If a medicine has proved ſalutary in one inſtance, and failed in five, a phyſician would not chuſe

* This remark was firſt made by Mr Hume. See it illuſtrated at great length in his Eſſays, part 2. ſect. 4. See alſo Dr Campbell's Diſſertation on Miracles, p. 13. 14. Edit. 2.

to recommend it, except in a deſperate caſe; and would then conſider its ſucceſs as a thing rather to be wiſhed than expected. An equal number of favourable and unfavourable inſtances leave the mind in a ſtate of ſuſpenſe, without exciting the ſmalleſt degree of aſſurance on either ſide, except perhaps what may ariſe from our being more intereſted on the one ſide than on the other. A phyſician influenced by ſuch evidence would ſay, "My "patient may recover, and he may die: "I am ſorry to ſay, that the one event "is not one whit more probable than "the other." When the favourable inſtances exceed the unfavourable in number, we begin to think the future event probable in ſome degree; and more or leſs ſo, according to the ſurplus of favourable inſtances. A few favourable inſtances, without any mixture of unfavourable ones, render an event probable in a pretty high degree; but the favourable experience muſt be at once extenſive and uniform, before it can produce moral certainty. A man brought into being at maturity, and placed in a deſert iſland, would abandon himſelf to deſpair, when he firſt ſaw the

ſun

ſun ſet, and the night come on; for he could have no expectation that ever the day would be renewed. But he is tranſported with joy, when he again beholds the glorious orb appearing in the eaſt, and the heavens and the earth illuminated as before. He again views the declining ſun with apprehenſion, yet not without hope; the ſecond night is leſs diſmal than the firſt, but is ſtill very uncomfortable on account of the weakneſs of the probability produced by one favourable inſtance. As the inſtances grow more numerous, the probability becomes ſtronger and ſtronger: yet it may be queſtioned, whether a man in theſe circumſtances would ever arrive at ſo high a degree of moral certainty in this matter, as we experience; who know, not only that the ſun has riſen every day ſince we began to exiſt, but alſo that the ſame phenomenon has happened regularly for five thouſand years, without failing in a ſingle inſtance. The judgement of our great epic poet appears no where to more advantage than in his eighth book; where Adam relates to the angel what paſſed in his mind immediately after his awaking into life. The following paſſage

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is at once tranſcendently beautiful, and philoſophically juſt.

" While thus I call'd, and ſtray'd I knew
" not whither,
" From where I firſt drew air, and firſt be-
" held
" This happy light, when anſwer none re-
" turn'd,
" On a green ſhady bank, profuſe of
" flowers,
" Penſive I ſat me down; there gentle ſleep
" *Firſt* found me, and with ſoft oppreſſion
" ſeiz'd
" My drouſed ſenſe; *untroubled, though I*
" *thought*
" *I then was paſſing to my former ſtate*
" *Inſenſible, and forthwith to diſſolve* *.
Paradiſe loſt, b. 8. lin. 283."

Adam

* The beauty of theſe lines did not eſcape the elegant and judicious Addiſon; but that author does not aſſign the reaſon of his approbation. Spect. No 345. Will the reader pardon me, if I ſhould forget my ſubject for a moment, and offer another remark upon this paſſage? Adam had lived but a few minutes when he fell into this firſt ſleep, and could not have had time to form any eſtimate of the bleſſings of exiſtence, or the horrors of annihilation. An ordinary poet would have repreſented his hero in the ut-

moſt

Adam at this time had no experience of ſleep, and therefore could not, with any probability, expect that he was to recover from it. The approaches of it were attended with feelings ſimilar to thoſe he had experienced when awaking from non-exiſtence, and would naturally ſuggeſt that idea to his mind; and as he had no reaſon to expect that his life was to continue, would intimate the probability that he was again upon the verge of an inſenſible ſtate.

Now it is evident, from what hath been already ſaid, that the degree of probability muſt be intuitively perceived, or the degree of aſſurance ſpontaneouſly and inſtinctively excited in the mind, upon the bare conſideration of the inſtances on either ſide; and that without any medium of argument to connect the future event with the paſt experience. Reaſoning may be employed in bringing the inſtances into view; but when that is done, it is no

moſt agony of diſtreſs at the thought of returning to his original nothing; but Milton's Adam feels NO TROUBLE upon this occaſion. I know not what others may think, but to me this ſeems wonderfully charming and natural.

longer

longer neceſſary. And if you were to argue with a man, in order to convince him that a certain future event is not ſo improbable as he ſeems to think, you would only make him take notice of ſome favourable inſtance which he had overlooked, or endeavour to render him ſuſpicious of the reality of ſome of the unfavourable inſtances; leaving it to himſelf to eſtimate the degree of probability. If he continue refractory, notwithſtanding that his view of the ſubject is the ſame with yours, he can be reaſoned with in no other way, than by your appealing to the common ſenſe of mankind.

SECT. VII.

Of Analogical Reaſoning.

REaſoning from analogy, when traced up to its ſource, will be found in like manner to terminate in a certain inſtinctive propenſity, implanted in us by our Maker,

Maker, which diſpoſeth us to expect, that ſimilar cauſes in ſimilar circumſtances, do probably produce, or will probably produce, ſimilar effects. The probability which this kind of evidence is fitted to illuſtrate, does, like the former, admit of a vaſt variety of degrees, from abſolute doubting up to moral certainty. When the ancient philoſopher who was ſhipwrecked in a ſtrange country, diſcovered certain geometrical figures drawn upon the ſand by the ſea-ſhore, he was very naturally led to believe, with a degree of aſſurance not inferior to moral certainty, that the country was inhabited by men, ſome of whom were men of ſtudy and ſcience, like himſelf. Had theſe figures been leſs regular, and liker the appearance of chance-work, the preſumption from analogy, of the country being inhabited, would have been weaker; and had they been of ſuch a nature as left it altogether dubious, whether they were the work of accident or of deſign, the evidence would have been too ambiguous to ſerve as a foundation for any opinion.

In reaſoning from analogy, we argue from a fact or thing experienced to ſome-

thing ſimilar not experienced; and from our view of the former ariſeth an opinion with regard to the latter; which opinion will be found to imply a greater or leſs degree of aſſurance, according as the inſtance from which we argue is more or leſs ſimilar to the inſtance to which we argue. Why the degree of our aſſurance is determined by the degree of likeneſs, we cannot tell; but we know by experience, that this is the caſe: and we alſo know by experience, that our aſſurance, ſuch as it is, ariſeth immediately in the mind, whenever we fix our attention on the circumſtances in which the probable event is expected, ſo as to trace their reſemblance to thoſe circumſtances in which we have known a ſimilar event to take place. A child who has been burnt with a red-hot coal, is careful to avoid touching the flame of a candle; for as the viſible qualities of the latter are like to thoſe of the former, he expects, with a very high degree of aſſurance, that the effects produced by the candle, operating on his fingers, will be ſimilar to thoſe produced by the burning coal. And it deſerves to be remarked, that the judgement which a child forms

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on theſe occaſions may ariſe, and often doth ariſe, previous to education and reaſoning, and while experience is very limited. Knowing that a lighted candle is a dangerous object, he will be ſhy of touching a glow-worm, or a piece of wet fiſh ſhining in the dark, becauſe of their reſemblance to the flame of a candle: but as this reſemblance is but imperfect, his judgement, with regard to the conſequences of touching theſe objects, will probably be more inclined to doubt, than in the former caſe, where the inſtances were more ſimilar. Thoſe who are acquainted with aſtronomy, think it extremely probable, that the planets are inhabited by living creatures, on account of their being in all other reſpects ſo like to our earth. A man who thinks them not much bigger than they appear to the eye, never dreams of ſuch a notion; for to him they ſeem in every reſpect unlike to our earth: and there is no other way of bringing him over to the aſtronomer's opinion, than by explaining to him thoſe particulars in which the planets and our earth reſemble one another. As ſoon as he comprehends theſe particulars, and this reſem-

blance, his mind of its own accord acknowledges the probability of the new opinion, without being led to it by any medium of proof, connecting the facts he hath experienced with other ſimilar and probable facts lying beyond the reach of his experience. Such a proof indeed could not be given. If he were not convinced of the probability by the bare view of the facts, you would impute his perſeverance in his old opinion, either to obſtinacy, or to want of common ſenſe; two mental diſorders for which logic provides no remedy.

SECT. VIII.

Of Faith in Teſtimony.

THere are many men in the world, whoſe declaration concerning any fact which they have ſeen, and of which they are competent judges, would engage my belief as effectually as the evidence of my own ſenſes. A metaphyſician may tell me, that this implicit confidence in teſtimony

mony is unworthy of a philoſopher and a logician, and that my faith ought to be more rational. It may be ſo; but I believe as before notwithſtanding. And I find that all men have the ſame confidence in the teſtimony of certain perſons; and that if a man ſhould refuſe to think as other men do in this matter, he would be called obſtinate, whimſical, narrow-minded, and a fool. If, after the experience of ſo many ages, men are ſtill diſpoſed to believe the word of an honeſt man, and find no inconvenience in doing ſo, I muſt conclude, that it is not only natural, but rational, expedient, and manly, to credit ſuch teſtimony: and though I were to peruſe volumes of metaphyſic written in proof of the fallibility of teſtimony, I ſhould ſtill, like the reſt of the world, believe credible teſtimony without fear of inconvenience. I know very well, that teſtimony is not admitted in proof of any doctrine in mathematics, becauſe the evidence of that ſcience is quite of a different kind. But is truth to be found in mathematics only? is the geometrician the only perſon who exerts a rational belief? do we never find conviction ariſe in our minds, except

except when we contemplate an intuitive axiom, or run over a mathematical demonſtration? In natural philoſophy, a ſcience not inferior to pure mathematics in the certainty of its concluſions, teſtimony is admitted as a ſufficient proof of many facts. To believe teſtimony, therefore, is agreeable to nature, to reaſon, and to ſound philoſophy.

When we believe the declaration of an honeſt man, in regard to facts of which he hath had experience, we ſuppoſe, that by the view of thoſe facts, his ſenſes have been affected in the ſame manner as ours would have been if we had been in his place. Faith in teſtimony, therefore, is in part reſolvible into that conviction which is produced by the evidence of ſenſe; at leaſt, if we did not believe our ſenſes, we could not, without abſurdity, believe teſtimony: if we have any tendency to doubt the evidence of ſenſe, we muſt, in regard to teſtimony, be equally ſceptical.

Again, when we believe a man's word, becauſe we know him to be honeſt, or, in other words, have had experience of his veracity, all reaſoning on ſuch teſtimony is

is ſupported by the evidence of experience, and by our preſumption of continuance: the firſt evidence reſolves itſelf into inſtinctive conviction, and the ſecond is itſelf an inſtinctive preſumption. The principles of common ſenſe, therefore, are the foundation of all true reaſoning concerning teſtimony of this kind.

It is ſaid by Mr HUME, in his Eſſay on Miracles, that our belief of any fact from the report of eye-witneſſes is derived from no other principle than experience; that is, from our obſervation of the veracity of human teſtimony, and of the uſual conformity of facts to the report of witneſſes. This doctrine is confuted with great elegance and preciſion, and with invincible force of argument, in Dr Campbell's Diſſertation on Miracles. It is, indeed, like moſt of Mr HUME's capital doctrines, directly repugnant to matter of fact: for our credulity is greateſt when our experience is leaſt; that is, when we are children; and generally grows leſs and leſs, in proportion as our experience becomes more and more extenſive: the very contrary of which muſt happen, if Mr HUME's doctrine were true.

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There is then in man a propenſity to believe teſtimony antecedent to that experience which Mr HUME ſuppoſes of the conformity of facts to the report of witneſſes. But there is another ſort of experience, which may perhaps have ſome influence in determining children to believe in teſtimony. Man is naturally diſpoſed to ſpeak as he thinks; and moſt men do ſo: for the moſt egregious liars ſpeak truth a hundred times for once that they utter falſehood *. It is unnatural for human creatures to falſify; and they never think of departing from the truth, except they have ſome end to anſwer by it. Accordingly children, while their native ſimplicity remains uncorrupted, while they have no vice to diſguiſe, no puniſhment to fear, and no artificial ſcheme to promote, do generally, if not always, ſpeak as they think; and ſo univerſally is their veracity acknowledged, that it has paſſed into a proverb, That children and fools tell truth. Now I am not certain, but this their innate propenſity to ſpeak

* See Dr Reid's Inquiry into the human mind, p. 475, &c.

truth,

truth, may in part account for their readineſs to believe what others ſpeak. They do not ſuſpect the veracity of others, becauſe they are conſcious and confident of their own. However, there is nothing abſurd or unphiloſophical in ſuppoſing, that they believe teſtimony by one law of their nature, and ſpeak truth by another. I ſeek not therefore to reſolve the former principle into the latter; I mention them for the ſake only of obſerving, that whether they be different principles, or different effects of the ſame principle, our general doctrine is equally clear, namely, That all reaſoning concerning the evidence of teſtimony doth finally terminate in the principles of common ſenſe. This is true, as far as our faith in teſtimony is reſolvible into experimental conviction; becauſe we have already ſhown, that all reaſoning from experience is reſolvible into intuitive principles, either of certain or of probable evidence: and ſurely it is no leſs true, as far as our faith in teſtimony is itſelf inſtinctive, and ſuch as cannot be reſolved into any higher principle.

Our faith in teſtimony doth often, but not always, amount to abſolute certainty.

That there is ſuch a city as Conſtantinople, ſuch a country as Lapland, and ſuch a mountain as the peak of Teneriffe; that there were ſuch men as Hannibal and Julius Ceſar; that England was conquered by William the Norman; and that Charles I. was beheaded; of theſe, and ſuch like truths, every perſon acquainted with hiſtory and geography accounts himſelf abſolutely certain. When a number of perſons, not acting in concert, having no intereſt to diſguiſe the truth, and ſufficient judges of that to which they bear teſtimony, concur in making the ſame report, it would be accounted madneſs not to believe them. Nay, when a number of witneſſes, ſeparately examined, and having had no opportunity to concert a plan beforehand, do all agree in their declarations, we make no ſcruple of yielding full faith to their teſtimony, even though we have no evidence of their honeſty or ſkill; nay, though they be notorious both for knavery and folly; becauſe the fictions of the human mind being infinite, it is impoſſible that each of theſe witneſſes ſhould, by mere accident, deviſe the very ſame circumſtances: if therefore

therefore their declarations concur, this is a certain proof, that there is no fiction in the caſe, and that they all ſpeak from real experience and knowledge. The inference we form on theſe occaſions is ſupported by arguments drawn from our experience; and all arguments of this ſort are reſolvible into the principles of common ſenſe. In general, it will be found true of all our reaſonings concerning teſtimony, that they are founded, either mediately or immediately, upon inſtinctive conviction or inſtinctive aſſent; ſo that he who has reſolved to believe nothing but what he can give a reaſon for, can never, conſiſtently with this reſolution, believe any thing whatſoever, either as certain or as probable, upon the teſtimony of other men.

SECT. IX.

Concluſion of this Chapter.

THE concluſion to which we are led by the above induction, would perhaps be acknowledged by ſome to be ſelf-evident, or at leaſt to ſtand in no great need of illuſtration; to others it might have been proved *a priori* in very few words; but to the greater part of readers, a detail of particulars may be neceſſary, in order to produce that ſteady and well-grounded conviction which it is our ambition to eſtabliſh. The argument *a priori* might be comprehended in the following words. If there be any creatures in human ſhape, who deny the diſtinction between truth and falſehood, or who are unconſcious of that diſtinction, they are far beyond the reach of philoſophy, and therefore have no concern in this inquiry. Whoever is ſenſible of that diſtinction, and is willing to acknowledge it, muſt confeſs, that truth is ſomething fixed and determinate, depending not upon man, but upon the Author

thor of nature. The fundamental principles of truth muſt therefore reſt upon their own evidence, perceived intuitively by the underſtanding. If they did not, if reaſoning were neceſſary to enforce them, they muſt be expoſed to perpetual viciſſitude, and appear under a different form in every individual, according to the peculiar turn and character of his reaſoning powers. Were this the caſe, no man could know, of any propoſition, whether it were true or falſe, till after he had heard all the arguments that had been urged for and againſt it; and, even then, he could not know with certainty, whether he had heard all that could be urged: future diſputants might overturn the former arguments, and produce new ones, to continue unanſwered for a while, and then ſubmit, in their turn, to their ſucceſſors. Were this the caſe, there could be no ſuch thing as an appeal to the common ſenſe of mankind, even as in a ſtate of nature there can be no appeal to the law; every man would be a law unto himſelf, not in morals only, but in ſcience of every kind.— We ſometimes repine at the narrow limits preſcribed to human capacity. *Hitherto*

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ſhalt thou come, and no further, ſeems a hard prohibition, when applied to the operations of mind. But as, in the material world, it is to this prohibition man owes his ſecurity and exiſtence; ſo, in the immaterial ſyſtem, it is to this we owe our dignity, our virtue, and our happineſs. A beacon blazing from a well known promontory is a welcome object to the bewildered mariner; who is ſo far from repining, that he has not the beneficial light in his own keeping, that he is ſenſible its utility depends on its being placed on the firm land, and committed to the care of others.

We have now proved, that "except we "believe many things without proof, we "never can believe any thing at all; for "that all ſound reaſoning muſt ultimate-"ly reſt on the principles of common "ſenſe, that is, on principles intuitively "certain, or intuitively probable; and, "conſequently, that common ſenſe is the "ultimate judge of truth, to which rea-"ſon muſt continually act in ſubordina-"tion." To common ſenſe, therefore, all truth muſt be conformable; this is its fixed and invariable ſtandard. And whatever

ver contradicts common ſenſe, or is inconſiſtent with that ſtandard, though ſupported by arguments that are deemed unanſwerable, and by names that are celebrated by all the critics, academies, and potentates on earth, is not truth, but falſehood. In a word, the dictates of common ſenſe are, in reſpect to human knowledge in general, what the axioms of geometry are in reſpect to mathematics: on the ſuppoſition that theſe axioms are falſe or dubious, all mathematical reaſoning falls to the ground; and on the ſuppoſition that the dictates of common ſenſe are erroneous or fallacious, all truth, virtue, and ſcience, are vain.

I know not but it may be urged as an objection to this doctrine, that, if we grant common ſenſe to be the ultimate judge in all diſputes, a great part of ancient and modern philoſophy becomes uſeleſs. I admit the objection with all my heart, in its full force, and with all its conſequences; and yet I muſt repeat, that if common ſenſe be ſuppoſed fallacious, all knowledge is at an end; and that even a demonſtration of the fallacy would itſelf be fallacious and frivolous. For if my

my feelings deceive me in one caſe, how ſhall I know that they do not deceive me in another? When a philoſopher demonſtrates to me, that matter exiſts not but in my mind, and, independent on me and my faculties, has no exiſtence at all; before I admit his demonſtration, I muſt diſbelieve all my ſenſes, and diſtruſt every principle of belief within me: before I admit his demonſtration, I muſt be convinced, that I and all mankind are fools; that our Maker made us ſuch, and from the beginning intended to impoſe on us; and that it was not till about the ſix thouſandth year of the world when this impoſture was diſcovered; and then diſcovered, not by a divine revelation, not by any rational inveſtigation of the laws of nature, not by any inference from former truths of acknowledged authority, but by a pretty play of Engliſh and French words, to which the learned have given the name of metaphyſical reaſoning. Before I admit this pretended demonſtration, I muſt bring myſelf to believe what I find to be incredible; which ſeems to me not a whit leſs difficult than to perform what is impoſſible. And when all this is done, if it were

were poſſible that all this could be done, pray what is ſcience, or truth, or falſehood? Shall I believe nothing? or ſhall I believe every thing? Or am I capable either of belief, or of diſbelief? or do I exiſt? or is there ſuch a thing as exiſtence?

The end of all ſcience, and indeed of every uſeful purſuit, is to make men happier, by improving them in wiſdom and goodneſs. I beg leave to aſk, whether the preſent race of men owe any part of their happineſs, wiſdom, or virtue, to what metaphyſicians have written in proof of the non-exiſtence of matter, and the neceſſity of human actions? If it be anſwered, That our happineſs, wiſdom, and virtue, are not at all influenced by ſuch controverſies, then I muſt affirm, that all ſuch controverſies are uſeleſs. And if it be true, that they have a tendency to promote wrangling, which of all kinds of converſation is the moſt unpleaſant, and the moſt unprofitable; or vain polemical diſputation, which cannot be carried on without waſte of time, and proſtitution of talents; or ſcepticiſm, which tends to make a man uncomfortable in himſelf, and unſervice-

able to others:—then I muſt affirm, that all ſuch controverſies are both uſeleſs and miſchievous; and that the world would be more wiſe, more virtuous and more happy, without them.—But it is ſaid, that they improve the underſtanding, and render it more capable of diſcovering truth, and detecting error.—Be it ſo:—but though bars and locks render our houſes ſecure, and though acuteneſs of hearing and feeling be a valuable endowment, it will not follow, that thieves are a public bleſſing; or that a man is intitled to my gratitude, who quickens my touch and hearing, by putting out my eyes.

It is further ſaid, that ſuch controverſies make us ſenſible of the weakneſs of human reaſon, and the imperfection of human knowledge; and for the ſanguinary principles of bigotry and enthuſiaſm, ſubſtitute the milky ones of ſcepticiſm and moderation. And this is conceived to be of prodigious emolument to mankind; becauſe a firm attachment to religion, which a man may call bigotry if he pleaſes, doth often give riſe to a perſecuting ſpirit; whereas a perfect indifference about it, which ſome men are good-

natured

natured enough to call moderation, is a principle of great good-breeding, and gives no ſort of diſturbance, either in private or public life. This is a plea on which ſome of our modern ſceptics ſeem to plume themſelves not a little. And who will venture to arraign the virtue or the ſagacity of theſe projectors? To accompliſh ſo great effects by means ſo ſimple, to prevent ſuch dreadful calamities by ſo innocent an artifice, — doth it not diſplay the perfection of benevolence and wiſdom? Truly I can hardly imagine ſuch another ſcheme, except perhaps the following. Suppoſe a phyſician of the Sangrado ſchool, out of zeal for the intereſt of the faculty, and the public good, to prepare a bill to be laid before the parliament, in theſe words: "That whereas good health, eſpe-
"cially when of long ſtanding, hath a
"tendency to prepare the human frame
"for acute and inflammatory diſtempers,
"which have been known to give extreme
"pain to the unhappy patient, and ſome-
"times even to bring him to the grave; and
"whereas the ſaid health, by making us
"briſk, and hearty, and happy, is apt
"alſo, on ſome occaſions, to make us diſ-

"orderly and licentious, to the great de-
"triment of glaſs windows, lanthorns,
"and watchmen: Be it therefore enacted,
"That all the inhabitants of theſe realms,
"for the peace of government, and the
"repoſe of the ſubject, be compelled, on
"pain of death, to bring their bodies
"down to a conſumptive habit; and that
"henceforth no perſon preſume to walk a-
"broad with a cane, on pain of having
"his head broke with it, and being ſet
"in the ſtocks for ſix months; nor to
"walk at all, except with crutches, to be
"delivered at the public charge to each
"perſon who makes affidavit, that he is
"no longer able to walk without them,"
&c.—He who can eradicate conviction from the human heart, may doubtleſs prevent all the fatal effects of enthuſiaſm and bigotry; and if all human bodies were thrown into a conſumption, I believe there would be an end of riot, as well as inflammatory diſeaſes. Whether the inconveniencies, or the remedies, be the moſt intolerable, might perhaps bear a queſtion. Bigotry, enthuſiaſm, and a perſecuting ſpirit, are very dangerous and miſchievous; univerſal ſcepticiſm would, I am

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ſure, be equally ſo, if it were to infect the generality of mankind. But what has religion and rational conviction to do with either? Nothing more than good health has to do with acute diſtempers, and rebellious inſurrections; or than the peace of government, and tranquillity of the ſubject, have to do with a gradual decay of our muſcular fleſh. True religion tends to make men great, and good, and happy; and if ſo, its doctrines can never be too firmly believed, nor held in too high veneration. And if truth be at all attainable in philoſophy, I cannot ſee why we ſhould ſcruple to receive it as ſuch, when we have attained it; nor how it can promote candour, good-breeding, and humanity, to pretend to doubt what we do and muſt believe, to profeſs to maintain doctrines of which we are conſcious that they ſhock our underſtanding, to differ in judgement from all the world except a few metaphyſical pedants, and to account thoſe principles diſputable which other men think the moſt indiſputable, and moſt ſacred. Conviction, and ſteadineſs of principle, is that which gives dignity, uniformity, and ſpirit, to human conduct,

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and without which our happineſs can neither be laſting nor ſincere. It conſtitutes, as it were, the vital ſtamina of a great and manly character; whereas ſcepticiſm betrays a weak and ſickly underſtanding, and a levity of mind, from which nothing can be expected but inconſiſtence and folly. In conjunction with ill-nature, bad taſte, and a hard heart, ſteadineſs and ſtrong conviction will doubtleſs make a bad man, and ſcepticiſm will make a worſe: but good-nature, elegant taſte, and ſuſceptibility of temper, when united with firmneſs of mind, become doubly reſpectable and lovely; whereas no man can act on the principles of ſcepticiſm, without incurring univerſal contempt.——But to return:

Mathematicians, and natural philoſophers, do in effect admit the diſtinction between common ſenſe and reaſon, as illuſtrated above; for they are content to reſt their ſciences either on ſelf-evident axioms, or on experiments warranted by the evidence of external ſenſe. The philoſophers who treat of the mind, do alſo ſometimes profeſs to found their doctrines on the evidence of ſenſe: but this profeſ-

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ſion is merely verbal; for whenever experience contradicts the ſyſtem, they queſtion the authenticity of that experience, and ſhow you, by a moſt elaborate inveſtigation, that it is all a cheat. For it is eaſy to write plauſibly on any ſubject, and in vindication of any doctrine, when either the indolence of the reader, or the nature of the compoſition, gives the writer an opportunity to avail himſelf of the ambiguity of language. It is not often that men attend to the operations of the mind; and when they do, it is with ſome metaphyſical book in their hands, which they read with a reſolution to admire or deſpiſe, according as the faſhion or their humour directs them. In this ſituation, or even when they are diſpoſed to judge impartially of the writer, their attention to what paſſes in their own mind is but ſuperficial, and is very apt to be ſwayed by a ſecret bias in favour of ſome theory. It is ſometimes difficult to diſtinguiſh between a natural feeling and a prejudice of education; our deference to the opinion of a favourite author makes us think it more difficult than it really is, and very often leads us to miſtake the one for

for the other. Nay, the very act of ſtudying, diſcompoſes our minds a little, and prevents that free play of our faculties from which alone we can judge with accuracy of their real nature. Beſides, language, being originally intended to anſwer the obvious exigencies of life, and expreſs the qualities of matter, becomes metaphorical when applied to the operations of mind. Thus we talk metaphorically, when we ſpeak of a warm imagination, a ſound judgement, a tenacious memory, an enlarged underſtanding; theſe epithets being originally and properly expreſſive of the qualities of matter. This circumſtance, however obvious, is not always attended to; and hence we are apt to miſtake verbal analogies for real ones, and to apply the laws of matter to the operations of mind; and thus, by the mere deluſion of words, are led into error before we are aware, and while our premiſes ſeem to be altogether unexceptionable. It is a favourite maxim with Mr LOCKE, as it was with ſome ancient philoſophers, that the human ſoul, previous to education, is like a piece of white paper, or *tabula raſa*; and this ſimile, harmleſs as it may appear, betrays

betrays our great modern into ſeveral important miſtakes. It is indeed one of the moſt unlucky alluſions that could have been choſen. The human ſoul, when it begins to think, is not extended, nor inert, nor of a white colour, nor incapable of energy, nor wholly unfurniſhed with ideas, (for if it think at all, it muſt have ſome ideas, according to Mr LOCKE's definition of the word *), nor as ſuſceptible of any one impreſſion or character as of any other. In what reſpect then does the human ſoul reſemble a piece of white paper? To this philoſophical conundrum I confeſs I can give no ſerious anſwer.—Even when the terms we uſe are not metaphorical, the natural abſtruſeneſs of the ſubject makes them appear ſomewhat myſterious; and we are apt to conſider them as of more ſignificancy than they really are. Had Mr HUME told the world in plain terms, that virtue is a ſpecies of vice, darkneſs a ſpecies of light, and ex-

* The word *idea* ſerves beſt to ſtand for whatſoever is the object of the underſtanding when a man thinks.—I have uſed it to expreſs whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking.

Introduction to Eſſay on Human Underſtanding, ſect. 8.

iſtence a ſpecies of non-exiſtence, I know not what metaphyſicians might have thought of this diſcovery; but ſure I am, no reader of tolerable underſtanding would have paid him any compliments on the occaſion *. But when he ſays, that contrariety is a mixture of cauſation and reſemblance; and, ſtill more, when he

* Mr Hume had ſaid, that the only principles of connection among ideas are three, to wit, reſemblance, contiguity in time or place, and cauſe or effect; *Inquiry concerning Human Underſtanding, ſect.* 3. It afterwards occurred to him, that contrary ideas have a tendency to introduce one another into the mind. But inſtead of adding contrariety to the liſt of connecting principles, which he ought to have done, and which would have been philoſophical, he aſſumes the metaphyſician, and endeavours to prove his enumeration right, by reſolving contrariety as a ſpecies into reſemblance and cauſation as genera. "Contraſt, or contrariety," ſays he, "is a connection among ideas, which may perhaps be conſidered as a mixture of cauſation and reſemblance. Where two objects are contrary, the one deſtroys the other, *i. e.* is the cauſe of its annihilation; and the idea of the annihilation of an object implies the idea of its former exiſtence." Is it poſſible to make any ſenſe of this? Darkneſs and light are contrary; the one deſtroys the other, or is the cauſe of its annihilation; and the idea of the annihilation of darkneſs implies the idea of its former exiſtence. This is given as a proof, that darkneſs partly reſembles light, and partly is the cauſe of light. Indeed! But, *O ſi ſic omnia dixiſſet!* This is a harmleſs abſurdity.

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brings a formal proof of this moſt ſage remark, he impoſeth on us by the ſolemnity of the expreſſion: we conclude, that "more is meant than meets the ear," and begin to fancy, not that the author is abſurd or unintelligible, but that we have not ſagacity enough to diſcover his meaning. It were tedious to reckon up one half of the improprieties and errors which have been introduced into the philoſophy of human nature, by the indefinite application of the words, *idea*, *impreſſion*, *perception*, *ſenſation*, &c. Nay, it is well known, that BERKELEY's pretended demonſtration of the non exiſtence of matter, at which common ſenſe ſtood aghaſt for many years, hath no better foundation, than the ambiguous uſe of a word. He who conſiders theſe things, will not be much diſpoſed to overvalue metaphyſical truth, (as it is called), when it happens to contradict any of the natural ſentiments of mankind.

In the laws of nature, when thoroughly underſtood, there appear no contradictions. It is only in the ſyſtems of philoſophers, that reaſon and common ſenſe are at variance. No man of common ſenſe ever

did or could believe, that the horſe he ſaw coming toward him at full gallop, was an idea in his mind, and nothing elſe; no thief was ever ſuch a fool, as to plead in his own defence, that his crime was neceſſary and unavoidable, for that man is born to pick pockets as the ſparks fly upward. When reaſon invades the rights of common ſenſe, and preſumes to arraign that authority by which ſhe herſelf acts, nonſenſe and confuſion muſt of neceſſity enſue; ſcience will ſoon come to have neither head nor tail, beginning nor end; philoſophy will grow contemptible; and its adherents will run no riſk of being treated, as in former times, upon the footing of conjurers, for all the world will think them downright fools.

PART

PART II.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE PRECEDING DOCTRINE, WITH INFERENCES.

BUT now a difficulty occurs, which we acknowledge to be not a little perplexing. Granting what is ſaid above to be true; that all legitimate reaſoning, whether of certain or of probable evidence, doth finally reſolve itſelf into principles of common ſenſe, which we muſt admit as certain, or as probable, upon their own authority; that therefore common ſenſe is the foundation and the ſtandard of all juſt reaſoning; and that the genuine ſentiments of nature are never erroneous:—yet by what criterion ſhall we know a ſentiment of nature from a prejudice of education, a dictate of common ſenſe from the fallacy of an inveterate opinion? Muſt every principle be admitted as true which we believe, without being able to aſſign a reaſon? then where

where is our ſecurity againſt prejudice and implicit faith! Or muſt every principle that ſeems intuitively certain, or intuitively probable, be reaſoned upon, that we may know whether it be really what it ſeems? then where our ſecurity againſt the abuſe ſo much inſiſted on, of ſubjecting common ſenſe to the teſt of reaſoning!—At what point muſt reaſon ſtop in its inveſtigations, and the dictates of common ſenſe be admitted as deciſive and final?

It is much to be regretted, that this matter has been ſo little attended to: for a full and ſatisfactory diſcuſſion of it would do more real ſervice to the philoſophy of human nature, than all the ſyſtems of logic in the world; would at once exalt pneumatology to the dignity of ſcience, by ſettling it on a firm and unchangeable foundation; and would go a great way to baniſh ſophiſtry from ſcience, and rid the world of ſcepticiſm. This is indeed the grand deſideratum in logic; of no leſs importance to the moral ſciences, than the diſcovery of the longitude to navigation. That I ſhall fully ſolve this difficulty, I am not ſo vain, nor ſo ignorant, as to imagine. But I humbly hope I ſhall be able

able to throw ſome light on the ſubject, and contribute a little to facilitate the progreſs of thoſe who may hereafter engage in the ſame purſuit. If I can accompliſh even this, I ſhall do a ſervice to truth, philoſophy, and mankind: if I ſhould be thought to fail, there is yet ſomething meritorious in the attempt. To have ſet the example, may be of conſequence.

I ſhall endeavour to conduct the reader to the concluſion I have formed on this ſubject, by the ſame ſteps which led me to it; a method which I preſume will be more perſpicuous, and more ſatisfactory, than if I were firſt to lay down a theory, and then to aſſign the reaſons. By the way, I cannot help expreſſing a wiſh, that this method of inveſtigation were leſs uncommon, and that philoſophers would ſometimes explain to us, not only their diſcoveries, but alſo the proceſs of thought and experiment, whether accidental or intentional, by which they were led to them.

If the boundary of reaſon and common ſenſe had never been ſettled in any ſcience, I would abandon my preſent ſcheme as altogether deſperate. But when I reflect, that

that in ſome of the ſciences it hath been long ſettled, with the utmoſt preciſion, and to univerſal ſatisfaction, I conceive better hopes, and flatter myſelf, that it may perhaps be poſſible to fix it even in the philoſophy of the mind. The ſciences in which this boundary has been long ſettled and acknowledged, are, mathematics, and natural philoſophy; and it is remarkable, that more truth has been diſcovered in thoſe ſciences than in any other. Now, there is not a more effectual way of learning the rules of any art, than by attending to the practice of thoſe who have performed in it moſt ſucceſsfully: a maxim which I ſuppoſe no leſs applicable to the art of inveſtigating truth, than to the mechanical and the fine arts. Let us ſee, then, whether, by attending to the practice of mathematicians and natural philoſophers, as contraſted with the practice of thoſe who have treated of the human mind, we can make any diſcoveries preparatory to the ſolution of this difficulty.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

Confirmation of this theory from the practice of Mathematicians and Natural Philoſophers.

SECT. I.

THat the diſtinction between reaſon and common ſenſe, as here explained, is acknowledged by mathematicians, we have already ſhown *. They have been wiſe enough to truſt to the dictates of common ſenſe, and to take that for truth which they were under a neceſſity of believing, even though it was not in their power to prove it by argument. When a mathematician arrives, in the courſe of his reaſoning, at a principle which he muſt believe, and which is of itſelf ſo evident that no arguments could either illuſtrate or inforce it, he then knows, that

* See part 1. chap. 2 ſect 1. of this Eſſay.

his reaſon can carry him no further, and he ſits down contented: and if he can ſatisfy himſelf, that the whole inveſtigation is fairly conducted, and does naturally terminate in this ſelf-evident principle, he is perſuaded that his concluſion is true, and cannot poſſibly be falſe. Whereas the modern ſceptics, from a ſtrange conceit, that their feelings are fallacious, and that Nature hath her roguiſh emiſſaries in every corner, commiſſioned and ſworn to play tricks with poor mortals, cannot find in their heart to admit any thing as truth, upon the bare authority of a feeling or ſentiment. It is doubtleſs a great advantage to geometry, that its firſt principles are ſo few, its ideas ſo diſtinct, and its language ſo definite. Yet a captious and paradoxical wrangler might, by dint of ſophiſtry, involve the principles of this ſcience in confuſion, provided he thought it worth his while *. But geometrical paradoxes would not rouſe the attention of

* The author of *the Treatiſe of Human Nature* has actually attempted this in his firſt volume: but finding, no doubt, that the public would not take any concern in that part of his ſyſtem, he has not republiſhed it in his ESSAYS.

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the public; whereas moral paradoxes, when men begin to look about for arguments in vindication of profligacy, become wonderfully intereſting, and can hardly fail of a powerful and numerous patronage. The corrupt judge; the proſtituted courtier; the ſtateſman who enriches himſelf by the plunder and blood of his country; the pettifogger, who fattens on the ſpoils of the fatherleſs and widow; the oppreſſor, who, to pamper his own beaſtly appetite, abandons the deſerving peaſant to beggary and deſpair; the hypocrite, the debauchee, the gameſter, the blaſphemer,—prick up their ears when they are told, that a celebrated author has written a book full of ſuch comfortable doctrines as the following: That juſtice is not a natural, but an artificial virtue, depending wholly on the arbitrary inſtitutions of men, and, previous to the eſtabliſhment of civil ſociety, not at all incumbent *: — That moral, intellectual, and corporeal virtues, are all of the ſame kind; in other words, That to want honeſty, to want underſtanding, and to want

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 37.

a leg, are equally the objects of moral diſapprobation; and that it is no more a man's duty to be grateful or pious, than to have the genius of Homer, or the ſtrength and beauty of Achilles *:—That every human action is neceſſary, and could not have been different from what it is †:—That when we ſpeak of power as an attribute of any being, God himſelf not excepted, we uſe words without meaning:—That we can form no idea of power, nor of any being endued with any power, much leſs of one endued with infinite power; and that we can never have reaſon to believe, that any object, or quality of an object, exiſts, of which we cannot form an idea ‡:—That it is unreaſonable to believe God to be infinitely wiſe and good, while there is any evil or diſorder in the univerſe; and that we have no good reaſon to think, that the univerſe proceeds from a cauſe ‖:—That the external material world

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 3. part 3. ſect. 4.

† Hume's Eſſays, vol. 2. p. 91. edit. 1767.

‡ Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 284. 302. 432. &c.

‖ Hume's Eſſay on a Particular Providence and Future State.

does

does not exiſt *; and that if the external world be once called in doubt as to its exiſtence, we ſhall be at a loſs to find arguments by which we may prove the being of God, or any of his attributes †: — That thoſe who believe any thing certainly are fools ‡: — That adultery muſt be practiſed, if men would obtain all the advantages of life; that, if generally practiſed, it would ſoon ceaſe to be ſcandalous; and that, if practiſed ſecretly and frequently, it would by degrees come to be thought no crime at all ‖: — That the queſtion concerning the ſubſtance of the ſoul is unintelligible **: — That matter and motion may often be regarded as the cauſe of thought ††: — That the ſoul of man becomes every different moment a different being ‡‡; ſo that the actions I performed

* Berkeley's and Hume's works *paſſim*.

† Hume's Eſſay on the Academical or Sceptical Philoſophy, part 1.

‡ Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 468.

‖ Hume's Eſſays, vol. 2. p. 409. edit. 1767.

** Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 434.

†† Id. ibid.

‡‡ Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 438.

laſt

laſt year, or yeſterday, or this morning, whether virtuous or vicious, are no more imputable to me, than the virtues of Ariſtides are imputable to Nero, or the crimes of Nero to the MAN OF ROSS.

I know no geometrical axiom, more perſpicuous, more evident, more generally acknowledged, than this propoſition, (which every man believes of himſelf), "My body exiſts;" yet this hath been denied, and volumes written to prove it falſe. Who will pretend to ſet bounds to this ſpirit of ſcepticiſm and ſophiſtry? Where are the principles that can ſtop its progreſs, when it has already attacked the exiſtence, both of the human body, and of the human ſoul? When it denies, and attempts to diſprove this, I cannot ſee why it may not as well deny a whole to be greater than a part, the radii of the ſame circle to be equal to one another; and affirm, that two right lines do contain a ſpace, and that it is poſſible for the ſame thing to be and not to be.

Had our ſceptics been conſulted when the firſt geometrical inſtitutions were compiled, they would have given a ſtrange turn to the face of affairs. They would have demanded

manded reaſons for the belief of every axiom; and as none could have been given, would have ſuſpected a fallacy; and probably (for the art of metaphyſical book-making is not of difficult attainment) have made books to prove *a priori*, that an axiom, from its very nature, cannot poſſibly be true; or at leaſt that we cannot with certainty pronounce whether it is ſo or not. "Take heed to yourſelves, gentle-"men; you are going to lay the founda-"tions of a ſcience; be careful to lay them "as deep as poſſible. Let the love of "doubt and diſputation animate you to "invincible perſeverance. You muſt go "deeper; truth (if there be any ſuch "thing) loves profundity and darkneſs. "Hitherto I ſee you quite diſtinctly; and, "let me tell you, this is a ſtrong preſump-"tion againſt your method of operation. "I would not give twopence for that phi-"loſophy which is obvious and intelli-"gible*. Tear up that prejudice, that I "may ſee what ſupports it. I ſee you can-"not move it, and therefore am violently "diſpoſed to queſtion its ſtability; you

* See Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 3. 4.

"cannot

" cannot pierce it, therefore who knows " but it may be made of unſound mate- " rials? There is no truſting to appearances. " It is the glory of a philoſopher to doubt; " yea, he muſt doubt, both when he is " doubtful and when he is not doubtful *. " Sometimes, indeed, we philoſophers are " abſolutely and neceſſarily determined to " live, and talk, and act, like other people, " and to believe the exiſtence both of our- " ſelves and of other things: but to this " abſolute and neceſſary determination, " we ought not to ſubmit, but in every " incident of life ſtill to preſerve our ſcep- " ticiſm. Yes, friend, I tell you, we " ought ſtill to do what is contrary to that " to which we are abſolutely and neceſſari- " ly determined †. I ſee you preparing to " ſpeak;

* " A true ſceptic will be diffident of his philoſophical " doubts, as well as of his philoſophical conviction."
Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 474.

† " I dine, I play a game at back-gammon, I con- " verſe, and am merry with my friends; and when, af- " ter three or four hours amuſement, I would return to " theſe ſpeculations, they appear ſo cold, ſo ſtrained, " and ſo ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to en- " ter into them any further. Here then I find myſelf ab- " ſolutely and neceſſarily determined to live, and talk, " and

"ſpeak; but I tell you once for all, that "if you reaſon or believe any thing *cer-* "*tainly* you are a fool *.—Good Sir, how "deep muſt we dig? Is not this a ſure "foundation?—I have no reaſon to think "ſo, as I cannot ſee what is under it.— "Then we muſt dig downward *in infini-* "*tum!*—And why not? You think you "are arrived at certainty. This very con- "ceit of yours is a proof that you have "not gone deep enough: for you muſt "know, that the underſtanding, when it "acts alone, and according to its moſt "general principles, entirely ſubverts it-

"and act, like other people in the common affairs of "life." *Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol.* 1. *p.* 467.

"In all the incidents of life we ought ſtill to preſerve "our ſcepticiſm. If we believe that fire warms, or wa- "ter refreſhes, 'tis only becauſe it coſts us too much "pains to think otherwiſe. Nay, if we are philoſophers, "it ought only to be upon ſceptical principles."

Id. p. 469.

* "If I muſt be a fool, as all thoſe who reaſon or be- "lieve any thing *certainly* are, my follies ſhall at leaſt "be natural and agreeable." *Id. p.* 468.

The inaccuracy of the expreſſion in this ſentence renders the meaning indefinite. It is not clear, whether Mr HUME means, that all who believe any thing are *certainly* fools, or that all who believe any thing *as certain* are fools.

" ſelf, and leaves not the loweſt degree of " evidence in any propoſition, either in " philoſophy or common life *. You are " no true philoſopher if you begin your " inquiries with the belief of any thing.— " Well, Sir, you may doubt and diſpute " as long as you pleaſe; but I believe that " I am come to a ſure foundation; here " therefore will I begin to build, for I am " certain there can be no danger in truſt-

* Verbatim from Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 464. 465.

Some perhaps may blame me for laying any ſtreſs on detached ſentences, and for underſtanding theſe ſtrong expreſſions in a ſtrict and literal ſignification. But it is not my intention to take any unfair advantages. I ſhould willingly impute theſe abſurd ſentences and expreſſions to the author's inadvertency: but then I muſt impute the whole ſyſtem to the ſame cauſe; for they imply nothing that is not again and again inculcated, either directly or indirectly, in Mr HUME's book. It is true ſome of them are ſelf-contradictory, and all of them ſtrongly diſplay the futility of this pretended ſcience. But who is to blame for this? They who allow themſelves to contradict matter of fact, either in converſation or writing, will find it no eaſy matter to avoid contradicting themſelves. — Again, if this ſcience be ſo uſeleſs, and if its inutility be ſometimes acknowledged even by Mr HUME himſelf, why, it may be ſaid, ſo much zeal in confuting it? For this plain reaſon, Becauſe it is immoral and pernicious, as well as unprofitable and abſurd.

" ing

" ing to the ſtability of that which is im-
" moveable. — Certain! Poor credulous
" fool! hark ye, ſirrah, you may be what
" the vulgar call an honeſt man, and a
" good workman; but I am certain (I mean
" I am in doubt whether I may not be cer-
" tain) that you are no philoſopher. Phi-
" loſopher indeed! to take a thing of ſuch
" conſequence for granted, without proof,
" without examination! I hold you four
" to one, that I ſhall demonſtrate *a priori*,
" that this ſame edifice of yours will be
" good for nothing."

I am well aware, that mathematical certainty is not to be expected in any ſcience but mathematics. But I ſuppoſe, that in every ſcience, ſome kind of certainty is attainable, or ſomething at leaſt ſufficient to command belief: and whether this reſt on ſelf-evident axioms, or on the evidence of ſenſe, memory, or teſtimony, it is ſtill certainty to me if I feel that I muſt believe it. And in every ſcience, as well as in geometry, I preſume it would be conſiſtent both with logic and with good ſenſe, *to take that for an ultimate principle, which forceth our believe by*

its own intrinſic evidence, and which cannot by any reaſoning be rendered more evident.

SECT. II.

IN natural philoſophy, the evidence of ſenſe and mathematical evidence go hand in hand; and the one produceth conviction as effectually as the other. A natural philoſopher would make a poor figure, ſhould he take it into his head to diſbelieve or diſtruſt the evidence of his ſenſes. The time was, indeed, when matters were on a different footing; when phyſical truths were made out, not by experiment and obſervation, but by dint of ſyllogiſm, or in the more compendious way of *ipſe dixit*. But natural philoſophy was then, what the philoſophy of the mind in the hands of our ſceptics is now, a ſyſtem of ſophiſms, contrived for the vindication of falſe theories.

That natural philoſophers never queſtion the evidence of ſenſe, nor ſeek either to diſprove, or to correct it, by reaſoning, is a poſition, which to many may at firſt ſight ſeem diſputable. I foreſee ſeveral objections,

objections, but ſhall content myſelf with examining two of the moſt conſiderable. And theſe I ſhall ſet in ſuch a light, as will, I hope, ſhow them to be inconcluſive, and at the ſame time preclude all other objections.

1. Do we not, (it will be ſaid), both in our phyſical obſervations, and in the common affairs of life, reject the evidence of ſight, in regard to the magnitude, extenſion, figure, and diſtance, of viſible objects, and truſt to that of touch, which we know to be leſs fallacious? I ſee two buildings on the top of yonder mountain; they ſeem to my eyes to be only three or four feet aſunder, of a round ſhape, and not larger than my two thumbs: but I have been at the place, and having aſcertained their diſtance, ſize, and figure, by touch, or menſuration, I know, that they are ſquare towers, forty yards aſunder, and fifty feet high. Do I not in this caſe reject the evidence of my ſight as fallacious, and truſt to that of touch? And what is it but reaſon that induces me to do ſo? How then can it be ſaid, that from the evidence of ſenſe there is no appeal to reaſon?—It will, however, be eaſy to ſhow, that

that in this inſtance we diſtruſt neither ſight nor touch, but believe implicitly in both; not becauſe we can confirm their evidence by reaſoning, but becauſe the law of our nature will not permit us to diſbelieve their evidence.

Do you perceive theſe two objects when you ſhut your eyes? No.—It is, then, by your ſight only that you perceive them? It is.—Does your ſight perceive any thing in theſe two objects, but a certain viſible magnitude, extenſion, and figure? No.—Do you believe, that theſe towers really appear to your eyes round, three feet aſunder, and of the ſize of your thumbs? Yes, I believe they have that appearance to my eyes.—And do you not alſo believe, that, to the eyes of all men who ſee as you do, and look at theſe objects from the place in which you now ſtand, they have the very ſame appearance? I have no reaſon to think otherwiſe.—You believe, then, that the viſible magnitude, diſtance, and ſhape, of theſe towers, is what it appears to be? or do you think, that your eyes ſee wrong? Be ſure, the viſible magnitude, figure, and diſtance, are not different from what I perceive them to be.—

But

But how do you know, that what you perceive by ſight either exiſts, or is what it appears to be? Not by reaſoning, I acknowledge, but by inſtinct.

Of the viſible magnitude, extenſion, and figure, our eyes give us a true perception. It is a law of nature, That while viſible objects retire from the eye, the viſible magnitude becomes leſs as the diſtance becomes greater: and the proportion between the increaſing diſtance and decreaſing viſible magnitude, is ſo well known, that the viſible magnitude of any given object placed at a given diſtance, may be aſcertained with geometrical exactneſs. The true viſible magnitude of objects is therefore a fixed and determinate thing; that is, the viſible magnitude of the ſame object, at the ſame diſtance, is always the ſame: we believe, that it is what our eyes perceive it to be; if we did not, the art of perſpective would be impoſſible; at leaſt we could not acknowledge, that there is any truth in that art.

But the object (you reply) ſeems no bigger than your thumb; and you believe it to be fifty feet high: how is that ſenſation reconcileable with this belief? You may

may eaſily reconcile them, by recollecting, (what is obvious enough), that the object of your belief is the tangible magnitude; that of your ſenſation, the viſible. The viſible magnitude is a perception of ſenſe; and we have ſeen already, that it is conceived to be a true, and not a fallacious perception: the tangible magnitude you do not at preſent perceive by ſenſe; you only remember it; or perhaps you infer it from the viſible, in conſequence of your knowledge of the laws of perſpective. When we ſee a lump of ſalt at a little diſtance, we may perhaps take it for ſugar. Is this a falſe ſenſation? is this a proof, either that our taſte, or that our ſight, is fallacious? No certainly: this is only an erroneous opinion formed upon a true ſenſation. A falſe ſenſation we cannot ſuppoſe it to be, without ſuppoſing that taſtes are perceived by the eyes. And you cannot believe your opinion of the magnitude of theſe towers to be a falſe ſenſation, except you believe that tangible qualities are perceived by ſight. When we ſpeak of the magnitude of objects, we generally mean the tangible magnitude, which is no more an object of ſight than of hearing. For

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it is demonſtrated in optics, that a perſon endued with ſight, but ſo fettered from his birth as to have no opportunity of gaining experience by touch, could never form any diſtinct notion of the diſtance, extenſion, magnitude, or figure of any thing. Theſe are perceptions, not of ſight, but of touch. We judge of them indeed from the viſible appearance; but it is only in conſequence of our having found, that certain changes in the viſible appearance do always accompany, and intimate, certain changes in the tangible diſtance, magnitude, and figure. Viſible magnitude, and tangible magnitude, are very different things; the former changes with every change of diſtance, the latter is always the ſame; the one is perceived by one ſenſe, the other by another. So that when you ſay, I ſee a tower two miles off, which appears no bigger than my thumb, and yet I believe it to be a thouſand times bigger than my whole body; — your ſenſation is perfectly conſiſtent with your belief: the contrariety is merely verbal; for the word *bigger*, in the firſt clauſe, refers to viſible, in the ſecond, to tangible magnitude. There is here no more real incon-

ſiſtency than if you were to ſay, I ſee a conical body of a white colour, and I believe it to have a ſweet taſte. If there be any difficulty in conceiving this, it muſt ariſe from our having a tendency to confound the objects of ſight and touch, more than thoſe of any other two ſenſes. As the knowledge of tangible qualities is of more conſequence to our happineſs and preſervation, than the knowledge of viſible appearances, which in themſelves can do neither good nor harm; we fix our principal attention on the tangible magnitude, the viſible appearance ſerving only as a ſign by which we judge of it: the mind makes an inſtantaneous tranſition from the viſible appearance, which it overlooks, to the tangible quality, on which it fixeth its attention; and the ſign is as little attended to, in compariſon of the thing ſignified, as the ſhape of written characters, or the ſound of articulate voices, in compariſon of the ideas which the writer or ſpeaker means to communicate.

But all men (it may be ſaid) do not thus diſtinguiſh between viſible and tangible magnitude. Many philoſophers have affirmed, and the vulgar ſtill believe, that magnitude

magnitude is a ſenſation both of ſight and touch: thoſe people, therefore, when ſenſible of the diminiſhed viſible appearance of the diſtant object, muſt ſuppoſe, that the perception they receive by ſight of the magnitude of that object, is really a falſe perception; becauſe different from what they ſhould receive by touch, or even by ſight, if the object were within three yards of their eyes. At any rate, they muſt ſuppoſe, that what their ſight perceives concerning magnitudes is not always to be depended on; and therefore that their ſight is a fallacious faculty.

Let this objection have as much weight as you pleaſe; yet will it not prove, that the evidence of ſenſe may be either confirmed or confuted by reaſon. Suppoſe then I perceive real magnitude, both by ſight and touch. I obſerve, that what my ſight perceives of magnitude is not always conſiſtent, either with itſelf, or with the ſenſations received by touch from the ſame object. The ſame man, within the ſame hour, appears ſix feet high, and not one foot high, according as I view him at the diſtance of two yards, or of two miles. What is to be done in this caſe? Both

ſenſations I cannot believe; for that the man really changes his ſtature, is utterly incredible. I believe his ſtature to be always the ſame; and I find, that to my touch it always appears the ſame; and that, when I look at the man at the diſtance of a few feet, my viſible perception of his magnitude coincides with my tangible perception. I muſt therefore believe, that what my ſight intimates concerning the magnitude of diſtant objects is not to be depended on. But whence ariſeth this belief? Can I prove by argument, that the man doth not change his ſtature? that the ſenſe, whoſe perceptions are all conſiſtent, is a true, and not a fallacious faculty? or that a ſenſe is not fallacious, when its perceptions coincide with the perceptions of another ſenſe? No, I can prove none of theſe points. It is inſtinct, and not reaſon, that determines me to believe my touch; it is inſtinct, and not reaſon, that determines me to believe, that viſible ſenſations, when conſiſtent with tangible, are not fallacious; and it is either inſtinct, or reaſoning founded on experience, (that is, on the evidence of ſenſe), that determines me to believe the man's

man's ſtature a permanent, and not a changeable thing. The evidence of ſenſe is therefore deciſive; from it there is no appeal to reaſon: and if I were to become ſceptical in regard to it, I ſhould believe neither the one ſenſe nor the other; and of all experience, and experimental reaſoning, I ſhould become equally diſtruſtful.

As the experience of an undiſcerning or careleſs ſpectator may be confirmed, or corrected, by that of one who is more attentive, or more ſagacious; ſo the evidence of an imperfect ſenſe may be corrected by that of another ſenſe which we conceive to be more perfect. But the evidence of ſenſe can never be corrected by any reaſoning, except by that which proceeds on a ſuppoſition, that our ſenſes are not fallacious. And all our notions concerning the perfection or imperfection of ſenſe are either inſtinctive, and therefore principles of common ſenſe; or founded in experience, and therefore ultimately reſolvible into this maxim, That things are what our ſenſes repreſent them.

Lucretius is much puzzled (as his maſter Epicurus had been before him) about the degree of credit due to our viſible perceptions

ceptions of magnitude. He juſtly enough obſerves, that no principle can be confuted, except by another more evident principle; and, therefore, that the teſtimony of ſenſe, than which nothing is more evident, cannot be confuted at all *: that the teſtimony of the noſtrils concerning odour cannot be corrected or

* See Diogenes Laertius, book 10. — Lucretius de rerum natura, lib. 4. ver. 480. This author had ſagacity enough to perceive the abſurdity of Pyrrhoniſm, and to make ſeveral judicious remarks on the nature of evidence. But in applying theſe to his own theory, every one knows that he is by no means conſiſtent. The poem of Lucretius is a melancholy ſpectacle; it is the picture of a great genius in the ſtate of lunacy. Except when the whim of his ſect comes acroſs his imagination, he argues with propriety, perſpicuity, and elegance. Pathos of ſentiment, ſweetneſs of ſtyle, harmony of numbers, and a beauty, and ſometimes a majeſty, of deſcription, not unworthy of Virgil, render his poem highly amuſing, in ſpite of its abſurd philoſophy. A talent for extenſive obſervation he ſeems to have poſſeſſed in an extraordinary degree; but where-ever the peculiar tenets of Epicureaniſm are concerned, he ſees every thing through a falſe medium. So fatal is the admiſſion of wrong principles. Perſons of the moſt exalted underſtanding have as much need to guard againſt them, as thoſe of the meaneſt capacity. If they are ſo imprudent, or ſo unfortunate, as to adopt them, their ſuperior genius, like the ſtrength of a madman, will ſerve no other purpoſe than to involve them in greater difficulties, and give them the power of doing more miſchief.

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refuted by that of the eye, nor the eye by the ear, nor the ear by the touch, nor the touch by the taſte; becauſe each of theſe ſenſes hath a ſet of objects peculiar to itſelf, of which the other ſenſes cannot judge, becauſe indeed they cannot perceive them. All this is very well; but there is one thing wanting, which I ſhould think obvious enough, even to one of Epicurean principles. Of taſtes we judge by the palate only; of ſmell, by the noſtrils only; of ſound, by the ears only; of colours, by the ſight only; of hardneſs, ſoftneſs, heat, cold, &c. by the touch only; but of magnitude we judge both by ſight and touch. In regard to magnitude, we muſt therefore believe either our ſight, or our touch, or both, or neither. The laſt is impoſſible: if we believe both, we ſhall contradict ourſelves: if we truſt our ſight, and not our touch, our belief at one time will be inconſiſtent with our belief at another; we ſhall think the ſame man ſix feet high, and not one foot high: we muſt therefore believe our touch, if we would exert any conſiſtent belief in regard to magnitude.

2. But do we not, in phyſical experiments,

ments, acknowledge the deceitfulneſs of ſenſe, when we have recourſe to the teleſcope and microſcope; and when, in order to analyſe light, which, to our unaſſiſted ſight, appears one uniform uncompounded thing, we tranſmit the rays of it through a priſm? I anſwer, This implies the imperfection, not the deceitfulneſs, of ſenſe. For if I ſuppoſe my ſight fallacious, I can no more truſt it, when aſſiſted by a teleſcope or microſcope, than when unaſſiſted. I cannot prove, that things are as they appear to my unaſſiſted ſight; and I can as little prove, that things are as they appear to my ſight aſſiſted by glaſſes.

But is it not agreeable to common ſenſe to believe, that light is one uniform uncompounded thing? and if ſo, is not common ſenſe in an error? and what can rectify this error but reaſoning?—I anſwer, It is undeniable, that light to the unaſſiſted eye appears uncompounded and uniform. If from this I infer, that light is preciſely what it appears to be, I form a wrong judgement, which I may afterwards rectify, upon the evidence of ſenſe, when I ſee a ray of light tranſmitted through

through a priſm. Here an error of judgement, or a falſe inference of reaſon, is rectified by my truſting to the evidence of ſenſe; to which evidence inſtinct or common ſenſe determines me to truſt.

But is it not common ſenſe that leads me to form this wrong judgement? Do not all mankind, naturally, and previouſly to all influence from education, judge in the ſame manner? Did not all philoſophers before Newton, and do not all the unlearned to this day, believe that light is a ſimple fluid? — I anſwer, Common ſenſe teacheth me, and all mankind, to truſt to experience. Experience tells us, that our unaſſiſted ſight, though ſufficiently acute for the ordinary purpoſes of life, is not acute enough to diſcern the minute texture of viſible objects. If, notwithſtanding this experience, we believe, that the minute texture of light, or of any other viſible ſubſtance, is nothing different from that appearance which we perceive by the naked eye; then our belief contradicts our experience, and conſequently is inconſiſtent with common ſenſe.

But what if you have had no experience ſufficient to convince you, that your ſenſes

are not acute enough to diſcern the texture of the minute parts of bodies?—Then it is certain, that I never can attain this conviction by mere reaſoning. If a man were to reaſon *a priori* about the nature of light, he might chop logic till doomſday, before he convinced me, that light is compounded of rays of ſeven different colours. But if he tell me of experiments which he himſelf hath made, or which he knows to have been made, this is quite another matter. I believe his teſtimony, and it makes up for my own want of experience. When I confide in his veracity, I conceive, and believe, that his ſenſes communicated a true perception; and that, if I had been in his place, I ſhould alſo have been convinced, by the evidence of my ſenſe, that light is truly compounded of rays of ſeven different colours. But I muſt repeat, that a ſuppoſition of my ſenſes being fallacious, would render me wholly inacceſſible to conviction, both on the one ſide and on the other.

Suppoſe a man, on ſeeing the coloured rays thrown off from the priſm, ſhould think the whole a deluſion, and owing to the nature of the medium through which the

the light is tranſmitted, not to the nature of the light itſelf; and ſhould tell me, that he could as eaſily believe my face to be of a green colour, becauſe it has that appearance when viewed through a pair of green ſpectacles, as that every ray of light conſiſts of ſeven diſtinct colours, becauſe it has that appearance when tranſmitted through a priſm;—would it be poſſible to get the better of this prejudice, without reaſoning? I anſwer, It would not: but the reaſoning uſed muſt all depend upon experiments; every one of which muſt be rejected, if the teſtimony of ſenſe be not admitted as deciſive. I could think of ſeveral expedients, in the way of appeals to ſenſe, by which it might be poſſible to reconcile him to the Newtonian theory of light; but, in the way of argument, I cannot deviſe a ſingle one.

On an imperfect view of nature, falſe opinions may be formed; but theſe may be rectified by a more perfect view, or, which in many caſes will amount to the ſame thing, by the teſtimony of thoſe who have obtained a more perfect view. The powers of man operate only within

a certain ſphere; and till an object be brought within that ſphere, it is impoſſible for them to perceive it. I ſee a ſmall object, which I know to be a man, at the diſtance of half a mile; but cannot diſcern his complexion, whether it be black or fair; nor the colour of his cloaths, whether it be brown, or black, or blue; nor his noſe, whether it be long or ſhort; I cannot even diſcern, whether he have any noſe at all; and his whole body ſeems to be of one uniform black colour. Perhaps I am ſo fooliſh as to infer, that therefore the man has no noſe, that his cloaths are black, and his face of the colour of his cloaths. On going up to him, I diſcover that he is a handſome man, of a fair complexion, dreſſed in blue. Surely it is not reaſoning that ſets me right in this inſtance; but it is a perfect view of an object that rectifies a wrong opinion formed upon an imperfect view. — I hear the ſound of a muſical inſtrument at a diſtance, but hear it ſo faintly, that I cannot determine whether it be that of a trumpet, a hautboy, a German flute, a French horn, or a common flute. I want to know from what inſtrument the ſound proceeds;

proceeds; and I have no opportunity of knowing from the information of others. Shall I ſtand ſtill where I am, and reaſon about it? No; that would make me no wiſer. I go forward to the place from whence the ſound ſeems to come; and by and by I can perceive, that the ſound is different from that of a French horn and of a trumpet; but as yet I cannot determine, whether it be the ſound of a hautboy or of a flute. I go on a little further, and now I plainly diſtinguiſh the ſound of a flute; but perhaps I ſhall not be able to know whether it be a German or a common flute, except by means of my other ſenſes, that is, by handling or looking at it.—It is needleſs to multiply inſtances for illuſtrating the difference between a perfect and an imperfect view of an object, and for ſhowing, that the mind truſts to the former, but diſtruſts the latter. For obtaining a perfect view, (or perfect perception), we ſometimes employ the ſame ſenſe in a nearer ſituation; ſometimes we make uſe of inſtruments, as ear-trumpets, ſpectacles, microſcopes, teleſcopes; ſometimes we have recourſe to the teſtimony of our other ſenſes, or of the ſenſes of o-

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ther men: in a word, we rectify or aſcertain the evidence of ſenſe by the evidence of ſenſe, but we never ſubject the evidence of ſenſe to the cogniſance of reaſon; for in imperfect or indefinite ſenſations, reaſoning could neither ſupply what is deficient, nor aſcertain what is ambiguous.

Our internal, as well as external ſenſes, may be, and often are, impoſed upon, by inaccurate views of their objects. This may be owing to inattention and prejudice on our own part, to diſſimulation and craft on the part of others; or it may be owing to miſapprehenſion or miſinformation altogether innocent. We may in ſincerity of heart applaud, and afterwards condemn, the ſame perſon for the ſame action, according to the different lights in which that action is preſented to our moral faculty. Juſt now I hear a report, that a human body is found dead in the neighbouring fields, with marks of violence upon it. Here a confuſed ſuſpicion ariſes in my mind of murder committed; but my conſcience ſuſpends its judgement till the true ſtate of the caſe be better known. I am not as yet in a condition to perceive thoſe qualities of this event which aſcertain

tain the morality of the action that produced it; no more than I can perceive the beauty or deformity of a face while it is veiled, or while it is at too great diſtance. A paſſenger informs me, that a perſon has been apprehended who confeſſes himſelf the murderer: my moral faculty inſtantly ſuggeſts, that this perſon has committed a crime worthy of a moſt ſevere and exemplary puniſhment. By and by I learn, from what I think good authority, that my former information is falſe, for that the man now dead had made an unprovoked aſſault on the other, who was thus driven to the neceſſity of killing him in ſelf-defence: my conſcience immediately acquits the manſlayer. I ſend a meſſenger to make particular inquiry into this affair; who brings word, that the man was accidentally killed by a fowler ſhooting at a bird, who, before he fired, had been at all poſſible pains to diſcover whether any human creature was in his way; but that the deceaſed was in ſuch a ſituation that he could not poſſibly be diſcovered. I regret the accident; but I blame neither party. Afterwards I learn, that this fowler was a careleſs fellow, and, though he

he had no bad intention, was not at due pains to obſerve whether any human creature would be hurt by his firing. I blame his negligence with great ſeverity, but I cannot charge him with guilt ſo enormous as that of murder.—Here my moral faculty paſſes ſeveral different judgements on the ſame action, and each of them is right, and will be in its turn believed to be right, and truſted to accordingly, as long as the information which gave riſe to it is believed to be true. I ſay the ſame action, not the ſame intention; a different intention appears in the manſlayer from each information; and it is only the intention and affections which the moral faculty condemns or approves. To diſcover the intention with which actions are performed, reaſoning is often neceſſary: but the deſign of ſuch reaſoning is not to ſway or inform the conſcience, but only to aſcertain thoſe circumſtances or qualities of the action from which the intention of the agent may appear. When this becomes manifeſt, the conſcience of mankind immediately and intuitively declares it to be virtuous, or vitious, or innocent. Theſe different judgements

judgements of the moral faculty are ſo far from proving that faculty to be fallacious, that they prove the contrary: at leaſt this faculty would be extremely fallacious, and abſolutely uſeleſs, if, in the caſe now ſuppoſed, it did not form different judgements.—While the intention of the agent is wholly unknown, an action is upon the ſame footing in regard to its morality, as a human face, in regard to its beauty, while it is veiled, or at too great diſtance. By removing the veil, or walking up to the object, we perceive its beauty and features; and by reaſoning, or by information concerning the circumſtances of the action, we are enabled to diſcover or infer the intention of the agent. The act of removing the veil, or of walking up to the object, hath no effect on the eye; nor hath the reaſoning any effect on the conſcience. While we view an object through an impure or unequal medium, through a pair of green ſpectacles, or an uneven pane of glaſs, we ſee it diſcoloured or diſtorted: juſt ſo, when miſrepreſented, a good action may ſeem evil, and an evil action good. If we be ſuſpicious of the repreſentation, if we be

aware of the improper medium, we diſtruſt the appearance accordingly; if not, we do and muſt believe it genuine. It is by reaſoning from our experience of human actions and their cauſes, or by the teſtimony of credible witneſſes, that we detect miſrepreſentations concerning moral conduct; and it is alſo by the experience of our own ſenſes, or by our belief in thoſe who have had ſuch experience, that we become ſenſible of inequalities or obſcurities in the medium through which we contemplate viſible objects. In either caſe, the evidence of ſenſe is admitted as finally deciſive. A diſtempered ſenſe, as well as an impure or unequal medium, may doubtleſs communicate falſe ſenſations; but we are never impoſed upon by them in matters of conſequence. A perſon in a fever may think honey bitter, and the ſmell of a roſe offenſive; but the deluſion is of ſo ſhort continuance, and of ſo ſingular a kind, that it can do no harm, either to him, or to the cauſe of truth. To a jaundiced eye, the whole creation may ſeem tinctured with yellow; but the patient's former experience, and his belief in the teſtimony of others, who aſſure him, that

that they perceive no alteration in the colour of bodies, and that the alteration he perceives is a common attendant on his diſeaſe, will ſufficiently guard him againſt miſtakes. If he were to diſtruſt the evidence of ſenſe, he could neither believe his own experience nor their teſtimony. He corrects, or at leaſt becomes ſenſible of the falſe ſenſation, by means of ſenſations formerly received when he was in health; that is, he corrects the evidence of an ill-informed ſenſe by that of a well-informed ſenſe, or by the declaration of thoſe whoſe ſenſes he believeth to be better informed than his own. Still it is plain, that from the evidence of ſenſe there can be no appeal to reaſon.

We conclude, therefore, that in natural philoſophy, our ſenſations are not ſuppoſed fallacious, and that reaſoning is not carried beyond the principles of common ſenſe. And yet in this ſcience full ſcope is given to impartial inveſtigation. If, after the firſt experimental proceſs, you ſuſpect that the object may be ſet in a ſtill fairer light, I know no law in logic, or in good ſenſe, that can or ought to hinder you from making a new trial: but if this new

trial turn to no account; if the object ſtill appear the ſame, or if it appear leſs diſtinct than before, it were folly not to remain ſatisfied with the firſt trial. Newton tranſmitted one of the refracted primitive colours through a ſecond priſm, thinking it not impoſſible that this colour might reſolve itſelf into others ſtill more ſimple; but finding it remain unaltered, he was ſatisfied that the primitive colours are not compounded, but ſimple, and that the experimental proceſs had already been carried far enough.—I take in my hand a perſpective glaſs, whoſe tube may be lengthened and ſhortened at pleaſure; and I am to find out, by my own induſtry, that preciſe length at which the maker deſigned it ſhould be uſed in looking at diſtant objects. I make ſeveral trials to no purpoſe; the diſtant object appears not at all, or but very confuſedly. I hold one end of the perſpective at my eye with one hand, and with the other I gradually ſhorten the tube, having firſt drawn it out to its greateſt length. At firſt all is confuſion; now I can diſcern the inequalities of the mountains in the horizon; now the object I am in queſt of begins to appear;

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it becomes leſs and leſs confuſed; I ſee it diſtinctly. I continue to ſhorten the tube; the object loſes its diſtinct appearance, and begins to relapſe into its former obſcurity. After many trials, I find, that my perſpective exhibits no diſtinct appearance except when it is of one particular length. Here then I fix; I have adjuſted the glaſſes according to the intention of the maker; and I believe that the diſtinct appearance is a juſt repreſentation of the diſtant object, or at leaſt much more accurate than any of the confuſed appearances; of which I believe, that they come the nearer to truth the more they approach to diſtinctneſs, and that the moſt confuſed repreſentations are the moſt falſe.

It was not by reaſoning about the fallacy of the ſenſes, and proſecuting a train of argument beyond the principles of common ſenſe, that men diſcovered the true ſyſtem of the world. In the earlier ages, when they imagined the ſun to be little bigger than the mountain beyond which he diſappeared, it was abſurd to think of the earth revolving round him. But in proceſs of time, ingenious men, who applied themſelves to the obſervation

of

of the heavenly bodies, not with a view to confute popular errors, for they could not as yet even ſuſpect the vulgar opinion to be erroneous, but merely to gratify their own laudable curioſity, began to conceive more exalted notions of the mundane ſyſtem. They ſoon diſtinguiſhed the planets from the fixed ſtars, by obſerving the former to be more variable in their appearances. After a long ſucceſſion of years, employed, not in reaſoning, but attentive obſervation, they came at laſt to underſtand the motions of the ſun and moon ſo well, that, to the utter aſtoniſhment of the vulgar, they began to calculate eclipſes; a degree of knowledge they could not attain, without being convinced, that the ſun and moon are very large bodies, placed at very great diſtances from the earth, the former much larger, and more remote, than the latter. Thus far it is impoſſible to ſhow, that any reaſoning had been employed by thoſe ancient aſtronomers, either to prove, or to diſprove, the evidence of the ſenſes. On the contrary, they muſt all along have taken it for granted, that the ſenſes are not fallacious; ſuppoſing only, (what it is certainly

tainly agreeable to common ſenſe to ſuppoſe), that the experience of a diligent obſerver is more to be depended on than that of the inattentive multitude. As men grew more and more acquainted with the motions and appearances of the heavenly bodies, they became more and more ſenſible, that the ſun, earth, and planets, bear ſome very peculiar relation to one another: and having learned, from the phenomena of eclipſes, and ſome other natural appearances, that the ſun is bigger than the earth *, they might, without abſurdity, begin to ſuſpect, that poſſibly the ſun might be the centre round which the earth and other planets revolve; eſpecially conſidering the magnificence of that glorious luminary, and the wonderful and delightful effects produced by the influence of his

* Heraclitus maintained, that the ſun is but a foot broad; Anaxagoras, that he is much larger than the country of Peloponneſus; and Epicurus, that he is no bigger than he appears to the eye. But the aſtronomers of antiquity maintained, that he is bigger than the earth; eight times, according to the Egyptians; eighteen times, according to Eratoſthenes; three hundred times, according to Cleomedes; one thouſand and fifty times, according to Hipparchus; and fifty-nine thouſand three hundred and nineteen times, according to Poſſidonius.

beams,

beams, while at the ſame time he ſeems not to derive any advantage from the earth, or other planets. But if the matter had been carried no further, no reaſoning from theſe circumſtances could ever have amounted to a proof of the point in queſtion, though it might breed a faint preſumption in its favour. For ſtill the evidence of ſenſe ſeemed to contradict it; an evidence which nothing can diſprove, but the evidence of ſenſe placed in circumſtances more favourable to accurate obſervation. The invention of optical glaſſes did at laſt furniſh the means of making experiments with regard to this matter, and for putting man in circumſtances more favourable to accurate obſervation; and thus the point was brought to the teſt of common ſenſe. And now we not only know that the Copernican theory is true, for every perſon who underſtands it is convinced of its truth; but we alſo know to what cauſes the univerſal belief of the contrary doctrine is to be aſcribed. We know that men, conſidering the remote ſituation of our earth, and the imperfection of our ſenſes, could not poſſibly have judged otherwiſe than they did, till that imperfection

tion was remedied, either by accuracy of obſervation, or by the invention of optical inſtruments. We ſpeak not of revelation; which hath indeed been vouchſafed to man for the regulation of his moral conduct; but which it would be preſumption to expect or deſire merely for the gratification of curioſity.

It is evident from what hath been ſaid, that in natural philoſophy, as well as in mathematics, no argumentation is proſecuted beyond ſelf-evident principles; that as in the latter all reaſoning terminates in intuition, ſo in the former it is ultimately reſolvible into the evidence of ſenſe. And as, in mathematics, that is accounted an intuitive axiom, which is of itſelf ſo clear and evident, that it cannot poſſibly be illuſtrated or inforced by any medium of proof, and which muſt be believed, and is in fact believed, by all, on its own authority; ſo, in natural philoſophy, that is accounted an ultimate principle, undeniable and unqueſtionable, which is ſupported by the evidence of a well-informed ſenſe, placed ſo as to perceive its object. In mathematics, that is accounted falſe doctrine which is inconſiſtent with any ſelf-evi-

dent principle; in natural philoſophy, that is rejected which contradicts matter of fact, or, in other words, which is repugnant to the appearances of things as perceived by external ſenſe.

Regulated by this criterion of truth, mathematics and natural philoſophy have become of all ſciences the moſt reſpectable in point of certainty. Hence I am encouraged to hope, that if the ſame criterion were univerſally adopted by philoſophers of the mind, the ſcience of human nature, inſtead of being, as at preſent, a chaos of ambiguity and contradiction, would acquire a conſiderable degree of certainty, perſpicuity, and order. If truth be at all attainable in this ſcience, (and if it is not attainable, why ſhould we trouble our heads about it?), ſurely it muſt be attained by the ſame means as in thoſe other ſciences. For of the eternal relations and fitneſſes of things, we know nothing; all that we know of truth and falſehood is, that our conſtitution determines us in ſome caſes to believe, in others to diſbelieve; and that to us is truth which we feel that we muſt believe; and that to us is falſehood which we feel that we muſt diſbelieve

diſbelieve *. There are innumerable truths with which we are wholly unacquainted; there are perhaps ſome truths which

* Of the notions attending the perception of certain truth, we formerly mentioned this as one, "That in regard to ſuch truth, we ſuppoſe we ſhould entertain the "ſame ſentiments and belief if we were perfectly acquainted with all nature." Leſt it ſhould be thought, that we mean to extend this notion too far, it ſeems proper to introduce in this place the following remarks.

1 The axioms and demonſtrated concluſions of geometry are certainly true, and certainly agreeable to the nature of things. Thus we judge of them at preſent; and thus we neceſſarily believe, that we ſhould judge of them, even if we were endued with omniſcience and infallibility. It is a natural dictate of human underſtanding, that the contrary of theſe truths muſt for ever remain abſurd and impoſſible: and that omnipotence itſelf cannot change their nature; though it might ſo deprave our judgement, as to make us diſbelieve, or not perceive them.

2. That my body exiſts, and is endued with a thinking, active, and permanent principle, which I call my ſoul; — That the material world hath ſuch an exiſtence as the vulgar aſcribe to it, that is, a real ſeparate exiſtence, to which its being perceived is in no wiſe neceſſary; — That the men, beaſts, houſes, and mountains, we ſee and feel around us, are not imaginary, but real and material beings, and ſuch, in reſpect of ſhape and tangible magnitude, as they appear to our ſenſes; — I am not only conſcious that I believe, but alſo certain, that ſuch is the nature of theſe things; and that, thus far at leaſt, in regard to the nature of theſe things, an omniſcient and infallible being cannot think me miſtaken.

which we reject as falſehood; but, ſurely, we muſt both know and believe a truth before we can acknowledge it as ſuch: and

Of theſe truths I am ſo certain, that I ſcruple not to pronounce every being in an error who is of a contrary ſentiment concerning them. For ſuppoſe an intelligent creature, an angel for inſtance, to believe that there are not in the univerſe any ſuch things as this ſolar ſyſtem, this earth, theſe mountains, houſes, animals, this being whom I call myſelf; could I, by any effort, bring myſelf to believe, that his opinion is a true one, and implies a propoſition expreſſive of ſomething agreeable to the nature of things? It is impoſſible and inconceivable. My underſtanding intimates, that ſuch an opinion would as certainly be falſe, as it is falſe that two and two are equal to ten, or that things equal to one and the ſame thing are unequal to one another. Yet this is an opinion which omnipotence could render true, by annihilating the whole of this ſolar ſyſtem; or make me admit as true, by depriving me of underſtanding. But ſo long as this ſolar ſyſtem remains unannihilated, and my intellect undepraved, there is not a geometrical axiom more true, or more evident to me, than that this ſolar ſyſtem exiſts; there is not a geometrical axiom which has any better title to be accounted a principle of human knowledge; there is not a geometrical axiom againſt which it is more abſurd, more unreaſonable, more unphiloſophical, to argue.

3. That ſnow is white, fire hot, gold yellow, and ſugar ſweet, we believe to be certainly true. Theſe bodies affect our eyes, touch, and palate, in a peculiar manner; and we have no reaſon to think, that they affect the organs of different men in a different manner: on the contrary, we believe, with full aſſurance, founded on ſufficient

and belief is nothing but a perception, or, if you pleaſe, an action, of the mind, the peculiar nature of which we all

cient reaſon, that they affect the ſenſes of all men in the ſame manner. The peculiar ſenſation we receive from them depends on three things; on the nature of the object perceived, on the nature of the organ of perception, and on the nature of the percipient being. Of each of theſe things the Deity could change the nature; and make ſugar bitter, fire cold, ſnow black, and gold green. But till this be done, in other words, while things continue as they are, it is as certainly true, that ſnow is white, fire hot, &c. as that two and two are equal to four, or a whole greater than a part. If we ſuppoſe, that ſnow, notwithſtanding its appearance, is black, or not white, we muſt alſo ſuppoſe, that our ſenſes and intellect are fallacious faculties; and therefore cannot admit any thing as true which has no better evidence than that of ſenſe and intellect. If a creature of a different nature from man were to ſay, That ſnow is black, and hot, I ſhould reply, (ſuppoſing him to uſe theſe words in the ſame ſenſe in which I uſe them), It may poſſibly have that appearance to your ſenſes, but it has not that appearance to mine: it may therefore, in regard to your faculties, be true; and if ſo, it ought to conſtitute a part of your philoſophy: but of my philoſophy it cannot conſtitute a part, becauſe, in reſpect of my faculties, it is falſe, being contrary to fact and experience. If the ſame being were to affirm, That a part is equal to a whole, I ſhould anſwer, It is impoſſible; none can think ſo but thoſe who are deſtitute of underſtanding. If he were to ſay, The ſolar ſyſtem explained by Newton does not exiſt, I ſhould anſwer, You are miſtaken; if your knowledge were not imperfect, you would think otherwiſe; I am certain that it does exiſt. —

We

all know by internal feeling or conſciouſneſs, and cannot poſſibly know in any other way.

I

We ſee, by thus ſtating the caſe, what is the difference between theſe three ſorts of certainty. But ſtill, in reſpect to man, theſe three ſorts are all equally evident, equally certain, and equally unſuſceptible of confutation: and none of them can be diſbelieved or doubted by us, except we diſavow the diſtinction between truth and falſehood, by ſuppoſing our faculties fallacious.

4. Of moral truth, we cannot bring ourſelves to think, that the Deity's notions (pardon the expreſſion) are contrary to ours. If we believe Him omniſcient and infallible, can we alſo believe, that, in his ſight, cruelty, injuſtice, and ingratitude, are worthy of reward and praiſe, and the oppoſite virtues of blame and puniſhment? It is abſolutely impoſſible. The one belief deſtroys the other. Common ſenſe declares, that a being poſſeſſed of perfect knowledge can no more entertain ſuch a ſentiment, than I with my eyes open can juſt now avoid ſeeing the light. If a created being were, in all caſes, to think that virtue which we think vice, and that vice which we think virtue, what would be our notions of his intelligence? Should we not, without heſitation, pronounce him irrational, and his opinion a monſtrous abſurdity? The abſurdity indeed is conceivable, and may be expreſſed in words that imply no contradiction: but that any being ſhould think in this manner, and yet not think wrong, is to us as perfectly inconceivable, as that the ſame thing ſhould be both true and falſe. We ſpeak of the great and leading principles of moral duty. Many ſubordinate duties there are, which reſult from the form of particular governments, and from particular modes of education; and there are ſome, which, though admirably adapted

to

I therefore would propoſe, "That in "the philoſophy of human nature, as well "as in phyſics and mathematics, princi- "ples

to the improvement and perfection of our nature, are yet ſo ſublime, that the natural conſcience of mankind, unaſſiſted by revelation, can hardly be ſuppoſed capable of diſcovering them: but in regard to juſtice, gratitude, and thoſe other virtues, of which no rational beings (ſo far as we know) are or can be ignorant, it is impoſſible for us to believe that our ſentiments are wrong. I ſay, there are duties of which no rational beings can be ignorant: for if moral ſentiments be the reſult of a bias, or *vis inſita*, communicated to the rational ſoul by its Creator, then muſt they be as univerſal as rational nature, and as permanent as the effects of any other natural law; and it is as abſurd to argue againſt their truth or authenticity, as againſt the reality of any other matter of fact. But ſeveral authors of eminence have denied this inference, as well as the principle whence it proceeds; or at leaſt, by calling the one in queſtion, have endeavoured to make us ſceptical in regard to the other. They have tried to prove, that moral ſentiment is different in different countries, and under different forms of religion, government, and manners; that therefore, in reſpect of it, there is no *vis inſita* in the mind; for that, previous to education, we are in a ſtate of perfect indifference as to virtue and vice; and that an oppoſite courſe of education would have made us think that virtue which now we think vice, and that vice which now we think virtue: in a word, that moral ſentiments are as much the effect of cuſtom and human artifice, as our taſte in dreſs, furniture, and the modes of converſation. In vindication of this doctrine, a multitude of facts have been brought together, to ſhow the prodigious diverſity, and even contrariety,

"ples be examined according to the ſtand-
"ard of common ſenſe, and be admitted
"or rejected as they are found to agree
" or

riety, that takes place in the moral opinions of different ages, nations, and climates. Of all our modern ſceptical notions, this ſeemed to me one of the moſt dangerous. For my own ſatisfaction, and for the ſake of thoſe whom it is my duty to inſtruct, I have been at great pains to examine it; and the examination has turned out to my entire ſatisfaction. But the materials I have collected on this ſubject are far too bulky to be inſerted here. The ſceptical arguments are founded, not only on miſtakes concerning the nature of virtue, but alſo on ſome hiſtorical facts miſrepreſented, and on others ſo equivocal, and bare of circumſtances, that they really have no meaning. From the number of hiſtorical, as well as philoſophical, diſquiſitions, which I found it neceſſary to introduce, the inquiry concerning the univerſality and immutability of moral truth, which I thought to have compriſed in a few pages, ſoon ſwelled into a treatiſe. It is now almoſt finiſhed; and I ſhall have no inclination to ſuppreſs it, if the ſucceſs of the preſent attempt give me any ground to hope that it may be uſeful.

5. Of probable truth, a ſuperior being may think differently from us, and yet be in the right. For every propoſition is either true or falſe; and every probable paſt event has either happened, or not happened, as every probable future event will either happen or not happen. From the imperfection of our faculties, and from the narrowneſs of our experience, we may judge wrong, when we think that a certain event has happened, or will happen: and a being of more extenſive experience, and more perfect underſtanding, may ſee that we judge wrong; for that the event in queſtion never did happen,

nor

"or diſagree with it:" more explicitly, "That thoſe doctrines be rejected which "contradict matter of fact; that is, which "are

nor ever will. Yet it does not follow, that a man may either prudently or rationally diſtruſt his probable notions as fallacious. Whatever man, by the conſtitution of his nature, is determined to admit as probable, he ought to admit as probable; for, in regard to man, that is probable truth. Not to admit it probable, when at the ſame time he muſt believe it probable, is mere obſtinacy: and not to believe that probable, which all other men who have the ſame view of all the circumſtances, believe probable, would be aſcribed to caprice, or want of underſtanding. If one in ſuch a caſe were refractory, we ſhould naturally aſk, How comes it that you think differently from us in this matter? have you any reaſon to think us in a miſtake? is your knowledge of the circumſtances from which we infer the probability of this event, different from ours? do you know any thing about it of which we are ignorant? If he reply in the negative, and yet perſiſt in contradicting our opinion, we ſhould certainly think him an unreaſonable man. Every thing, therefore, which to human creatures ſeems intuitively probable, is to be accounted one of the firſt principles of probable human knowledge. A human creature acts an irrational part when he argues againſt it; and if he refuſe to acknowledge it probable, he cannot, without contradicting himſelf, acquieſce in any other human probability whatſoever.

It appears from what has been ſaid, that there are various kinds of intuitive certainty; and that thoſe who will not allow any truth to be ſelf-evident, except what has all the characteriſtics of a geometrical axiom, are much miſtaken. From the view we have given of this ſubject,

" are repugnant to the appearances of " things, as perceived by external and in- " ternal ſenſe; and that thoſe principles be " accounted ultimate, undeniable, and un- " queſtionable, which are warranted by " the evidence of a well-informed ſenſe, " placed in circumſtances favourable to a " diſtinct perception of its object."

it would be eaſy to reduce theſe intuitive certainties into claſſes; but this is not neceſſary on the preſent occaſion. We are here treating of the nature and immutability of truth as perceived by human faculties. Whatever intuitive propoſition man, by the law of his nature, muſt believe as certain, or as probable, is, in regard to him, certain or probable truth; and muſt conſtitute a part of human knowledge, and remain unalterably the ſame, as long as the human conſtitution remains unaltered. And we muſt often repeat, that he who attempts to diſprove ſuch intuitive truth, or to make men ſceptical in regard to it, acts a part as inconſiſtent with ſound reaſoning, and as effectually ſubverſive of all human knowledge, as if he attempted to diſprove truths which he certainly knew to be agreeable to the eternal and neceſſary relations of things. Whether the Deity can or cannot change theſe truths into falſehoods, we need not ſeek to determine, becauſe it is of no conſequence to us to know. It becomes us better to inquire, with humility and reverence, into what he hath done, than vainly, and perhaps preſumptuouſly, into what he can do. Whatever he hath been pleaſed to eſtabliſh in the univerſe, is as certainly eſtabliſhed, as if it were in itſelf unchangeable and from eternity; and, while he wills it to remain what he hath made it, is as permanent as his own nature.

But

But what do you mean by a *well-informed ſenſe?* How ſhall I know, that any particular faculty of mine is not defective, depraved, or fallacious?—Perhaps it is not eaſy, at leaſt it would furniſh matter for too long a digreſſion, to give an unexceptionable anſwer to this queſtion. Nor is it at preſent abſolutely neceſſary; becauſe it will appear in the ſequel, that, however difficult it may be in ſome caſes, to diſtinguiſh a firſt principle intuitively, yet there are certain marks, by which thoſe reaſonings that tend to the ſubverſion of a firſt principle, may be detected, at leaſt in all caſes of importance. However, we ſhall offer a remark or two in anſwer to the queſtion; which, tho' they ſhould not appear in every reſpect unexceptionable, may yet throw light on the ſubject, and ſerve to prepare the mind of the reader for ſome things that are to follow.

Firſt, then, if I wanted to certify myſelf concerning any particular ſenſe or percipient faculty, that it is neither depraved nor defective, I would attend to the feelings or ſenſations communicated by it; and obſerve, whether they be clear

and definite, and ſuch as I am, of my own accord, diſpoſed to confide in without heſitation, as true, genuine, and natural. If they are ſuch, I ſhould certainly act upon them, till I had ſome poſitive reaſon to think them fallacious. Secondly, I conſider, whether the ſenſations received by this faculty be uniformly ſimilar in ſimilar circumſtances. If they are not, I ſhould ſuſpect, either that it is now depraved, or was formerly ſo; and if I had no other criterion to direct me, ſhould be much at a loſs to know whether I ought to truſt the former or the latter experience; perhaps I ſhould diſtruſt both. If they are uniform, if my preſent and my paſt experience do exactly coincide, I ſhall then be diſpoſed to think them both right. Thirdly, I conſider, whether, in acting upon the ſuppoſition that the faculty in queſtion is well-informed, I have ever been miſled to my hurt or inconvenience; if not, then have I good reaſon to think, that I was not miſtaken when I formed that ſuppoſition, and that this faculty is really what I ſuppoſed it to be. Fourthly, If the ſenſations communicated by this faculty be incompatible with one another,

other, or irreconcileable to the perceptions of my other faculties, I ſhould ſuſpect a depravation of the former: for the laws of nature, as far as my experience goes, are perfectly conſiſtent; and I have a natural ſuggeſtion that they are univerſally ſo. It is therefore a preſumption, that my faculties are well informed, when the perceptions of one are quite conſiſtent with thoſe of the reſt, and with one another. In a ſtate of ſolitude I muſt ſatisfy myſelf with theſe criteria; but when I go abroad into the world, I have acceſs to another criterion, which, in many caſes, will be reckoned more deciſive than any of theſe, and which, in concurrence with theſe, will be ſufficient to baniſh doubt from every rational mind. I compare my ſenſations and notions with thoſe of other men; and if I find a perfect coincidence, I ſhall then be ſatisfied that my ſenſations are according to the law of human nature, and therefore right.—To illuſtrate all this by an example:

I want to know whether my ſenſe of ſeeing be a well-informed faculty. Firſt, I have reaſon to think that it is, becauſe my eyes communicate to me ſuch ſenſations

tions as I, of my own accord, am diſpoſed to confide in. There is ſomething in my perceptions of ſight ſo diſtinct, and ſo definite, that I do not find myſelf in the leaſt diſpoſed to doubt whether things be what my eyes repreſent them. Even the obſcurer ſuggeſtions of this faculty carry along with them their own evidence, and my belief. I am confident, that the ſun and moon are round as they appear to be, that the rainbow is arched, that graſs is green, ſnow white, and the heavens azure; and this I ſhould have believed, though I had paſſed all my days in ſolitude, and never known any thing of other animals, or their ſenſes. Secondly, I find that my notions of the viſible qualities of bodies are the ſame now they have always been. If this were not the caſe, if where I ſaw greenneſs yeſterday I were to ſee yellow to-day, I ſhould be apt to ſuppoſe, that my ſight had ſuffered ſome depravation, except I had reaſon to think, that the objects had really changed colour. But indeed we have ſo ſtrong a tendency to believe our ſenſes, that I doubt not but in ſuch a caſe I ſhould be more diſpoſed to ſuſpect a change in the object than in my eye-

eye-ſight: much would depend on the circumſtances of the caſe. We rub our eyes when we want to look at any thing with accuracy; for we know by experience, that motes, and cloudy ſpecks, which may be removed by rubbing, do ſometimes float in the eye, and hurt the ſight. But if the alteration of the viſible qualities in the external object be ſuch as we have never experienced from a depravation of the organ, we ſhould be inclined to truſt our eye-ſight, rather than to ſuppoſe, that the external object has remained unaltered. Thirdly, No evil conſequence has ever happened to me when acting upon the ſuppoſition, that my faculty of ſeeing is a well-informed ſenſe; whereas, if I were to act on the contrary ſuppoſition, I ſhould ſoon have occaſion to regret my ſcepticiſm. I ſee a poſt in my way; by turning a little aſide, I paſs it unhurt: but if I had ſuppoſed my ſight fallacious, and gone ſtraight forward, a bloody noſe, or ſomething worſe, might have been the conſequence. If, when I direct my courſe obliquely, in order to avoid the poſt that ſeems to ſtand directly before me, I were to run my head full againſt

gainſt it, I ſhould inſtantly ſuſpect a depravation in my eye-ſight; but as I never experience any misfortune of this kind, I believe that my ſenſe of ſeeing is a well-informed faculty. Fourthly, The perceptions received by this ſenſe are perfectly conſiſtent with one another, and with the perceptions received by my other faculties. When I ſee the appearance of a ſolid body in my way, my touch always confirms the teſtimony of my ſight; if it did not, I ſhould ſuſpect a fallacy in one or other of thoſe ſenſes, perhaps in both. When I look on a line of ſoldiers, they all ſeem ſtanding perpendicular, as I myſelf ſtand; but if the men at the extremities of the line, without leaning againſt any thing, ſeemed to form an angle of forty-five degrees with the earth's ſurface, I ſhould certainly ſuſpect ſome unaccountable obliquity in my viſion. Laſtly, After the experience of ſeveral years, after all the knowledge I have been able to gather, concerning the ſenſations of other men, from reading, diſcourſe, and obſervation, I have no reaſon to think their ſenſations of ſight different from mine. Every body who uſes the Engliſh language calls

ſnow

ſnow white, and graſs green; and it would be in the higheſt degree abſurd to ſuppoſe, that what they call the ſenſation of whiteneſs, is not the ſame ſenſation which I call by that name. Some few perhaps ſee differently from me. A man in the jaundice ſees that roſe yellow which I ſee red; a ſhort-ſighted man ſees that picture confuſedly at the diſtance of three yards, which I ſee diſtinctly. But far the greater part of mankind ſee as I do, and differently from thoſe few individuals; whoſe ſenſe of ſeeing I therefore conſider as leſs perfect than mine. Nay, though the generality of mankind were all ſhort-ſighted, ſtill it would be true, that we who are not ſo, have the moſt perfect ſight; for our ſight is more accurate in its perceptions, qualifies us better for the buſineſs of life, and coincides more exactly, or at leaſt more immediately, with the ſenſations received by the other ſenſes. Yet the ſhort-ſighted, as well as they who have the acuteſt ſight, believe the declaration of this ſenſe, as ſoon as they are placed in a ſituation favourable to accurate obſervation: all the difference is, that it is more difficult, and often more inconvenient, for the for-

mer to place themſelves in ſuch a ſituation. Still it ought to be remembered, that a *perfect ſenſe* and a *well-informed ſenſe* are not ſynonymous terms. We call a ſenſe *well-informed*, in oppoſition to one that is *depraved* or *fallacious*. — *Perfection* and *imperfection* of ſenſe are relative terms, that imply a compariſon, either between different men, in reſpect of the acuteneſs of their ſenſes and faculties; or between any ſenſe, as it appears in a particular man, and the degree of acuteneſs which is found to belong to that ſenſe as it appears in the generality of mankind. I have two teleſcopes, one of which gives a diſtinct view of an object at two, and the other at four miles diſtance: both are equally *well-informed*, (if I may ſo ſpeak); that is, equally true in their repreſentations; but the one is much more *imperfect* than the other.

I do not at preſent offer any further illuſtrations of theſe criteria of a well-informed ſenſe. The reader who examines them by the rules of common prudence, will perhaps be ſatisfied with them: at leaſt I am apt to think, that few will ſuſpect the veracity of their faculties when they ſtand this teſt. Let it not be ſuppoſed,

ſed, that I mean to inſinuate, that a man never truſts his faculties till he firſt examine them after this manner: we believe our ſenſes previouſly to all reflection or examination; and we never diſbelieve them, but upon the authority of our ſenſes placed in circumſtances more favourable to accurate obſervation. If the reader is not ſatisfied with theſe criteria, it is no great matter. The queſtion concerning a well-informed ſenſe will be found not a little perplexing to one who attempts to anſwer it in words. I offer theſe remarks rather as hints to be attended to by other adventurers in this part of ſcience, than as a ſolution of the difficulty. If it were not that I preſume ſome advantage may be derived from them as hints, I ſhould have omitted them altogether; for on them the doctrine I mean to eſtabliſh doth not depend.

CHAP. II.

The preceding theory rejected by Sceptical Writers.

WE have ſeen, that mathematicians and natural philoſophers do, in effect, acknowledge the diſtinction between common ſenſe and reaſon, as above explained; admitting the dictates of the former as ultimate and unqueſtionable principles, and never attempting either to prove or to diſprove them by reaſoning. If we inquire a little into the genius of modern ſcepticiſm, we ſhall ſee, that, there, a very different plan of inveſtigation has been adopted. This will beſt appear by inſtances taken from that pretended philoſophy. But firſt let us offer a few general remarks.

SECT.

SECT. I.

General Obſervations. Riſe and progreſs of Modern Scepticiſm.

1. THE Carteſian philoſophy is to be conſidered as the ground-work of modern ſcepticiſm. The ſource of LOCKE's reaſoning againſt the ſeparate exiſtence of the ſecondary qualities of matter, of BERKELEY's reaſoning againſt the exiſtence of a material world, and of HUME's reaſoning againſt the exiſtence both of ſoul and body, may be found in the firſt part of the *Principia* of DES CARTES. Yet nothing ſeems to have been further from the intention of this worthy and moſt ingenious philoſopher, than to give countenance to error, irreligion, or licentiouſneſs. He begins with doubting; but it is with a view to arrive at conviction: his ſucceſſors (ſome of them at leaſt) the further they advance in their ſyſtems, become more and more ſceptical; and at length the reader is told, to his infinite pleaſure and emolument, that the underſtanding, acting alone, doth entirely ſubvert itſelf, and leaves not the loweſt degree of evidence

evidence in any propoſition whatſoever.

The firſt thing a philoſopher ought to do, according to DES CARTES, is to diveſt himſelf of all prejudices, and all his former opinions; to reject the evidence of ſenſe, of intuition, and of mathematical demonſtration; to ſuppoſe, that there is no God, nor heaven, nor earth; and that we have neither hands, nor feet, nor body; in a word, he is to doubt of every thing of which it is poſſible to doubt, and to be perſuaded, that every thing is falſe which can poſſibly be conceived to be doubtful. Now there is only one point of which it is impoſſible to doubt, namely, That I, the perſon who doubts, am thinking. This propoſition, therefore, *I think*, and this only, may be taken for granted; and nothing elſe whatſoever is to be believed without proof.

What is to be expected from this ſtrange introduction? One or other of theſe two things muſt neceſſarily follow. This author will either believe nothing at all; or if he believe any thing, it muſt be upon the recommendation of falſe and ſophiſtical reaſoning *. But DES CARTES is no

* See the firſt part of this Eſſay.

ſceptic

ſceptic in his moral reaſonings: therefore, in his moral reaſonings, he muſt be a ſophiſter. Let us ſee whether we can make good this charge againſt him by facts.

Taking it for granted that he thinks, he thence infers, that he exiſts: *Ego cogito, ergo ſum.* Now there cannot be thought where there is no exiſtence; before he take it for granted that he thinks, he muſt alſo take it for granted that he exiſts. This argument, therefore, proceeds on a ſuppoſition, that the thing to be proved is true; in other words, it is a ſophiſm, a *petitio principii.* Even ſuppoſing it poſſible to conceive thinking, without at the ſame time conceiving exiſtence, ſtill this is no concluſive argument, except it could be ſhown, that it is more evident to a man that he thinks, than that he exiſts; for in every true proof, a leſs evident propoſition is inferred from one that is more evident. But, *I think*, and *I exiſt*, are equally evident. Therefore this is no true proof. To ſet an example of falſe reaſoning in the very foundation of a ſyſtem, can hardly fail to have bad conſequences.

Having in this manner eſtabliſhed his own

own exiſtence, our author next proceeds to prove the veracity of his faculties; that is, to ſhow, by reaſoning, that what he thinks true is really true, and that what he thinks falſe is really falſe. He would have done better to have taken this alſo for granted: the argument by which he attempts to prove it, does more honour to his heart than to his underſtanding. It is indeed a ſophiſm of the ſame kind with the former, in which he takes that for granted which he propoſes to prove. It runs thus: We are conſcious, that we have in our minds the idea of a being infinitely perfect, intelligent, and powerful, neceſſarily exiſtent, and eternal. This idea differs from all our other ideas in two reſpects: it implies the notions of eternal and neceſſary exiſtence, and of infinite perfection; it neither is, nor can be, a fiction of the imagination; and therefore exhibits no chimera or imaginary being, but a true and immutable nature, which muſt of neceſſity exiſt, becauſe neceſſary exiſtence is comprehended in the idea of it. Therefore there is a God, neceſſarily exiſtent, infinitely wiſe, powerful, and true, and poſſeſſed of all perfection. This Being

ing is the maker of us and of all our faculties; he cannot deceive, becauſe he is infinitely perfect; therefore our faculties are true, and not fallacious *.—The ſame argument has been adopted by others, particularly by Dr Barrow. "Carteſius," ſays that pious and learned author, "hath "well obſerved, that, to make us abſolute-"ly certain of our having attained the "truth, it is required to be known, whe-"ther our faculties of apprehending and "judging the truth, be true; which can "only be known from the power, good-"neſs, and truth of our creator †."

I object not to this argument for the divine exiſtence, drawn from the idea of an all-perfect being, of which the human mind is conſcious; though perhaps it is not the moſt unexceptionable method of evincing that great truth. I allow, that when a man believes a God, he cannot, without abſurdity and impiety, deny or queſtion the veracity of his own faculties; and that to acknowledge a diſtinction between truth and falſehood, implies a per-

* Carteſii Princip. Philoſ. part. 1. §. 14. 15. 18.

† Leſt. Geomet. 7.

ſuaſion, that certain laws are eſtabliſhed in the univerſe, on which the natures of all created things depend, which (to me at leaſt) is incomprehenſible, except on the ſuppoſition of a ſupreme, intelligent, directing cauſe. But I acquieſce in theſe principles, becauſe I take the veracity of my faculties for granted; and this I feel myſelf neceſſitated to do, becauſe I feel it to be the law of my nature, which I cannot poſſibly counteract. Proceeding then upon this innate and irreſiſtible notion, that my faculties are true, I infer, by the juſteſt reaſoning, that God exiſts; and the evidence for this great truth is ſo clear and convincing, that I cannot withſtand its force, if I believe any thing elſe whatſoever.

Des Cartes argues in a different manner. Becauſe God exiſts, (ſays he), and is perfect, therefore my faculties are true. Right. — But how do you know that God exiſts? I infer it from the ſecond principle of my philoſophy, already eſtabliſhed, *Cogito, ergo ſum.* — How do you know that your inference is juſt? It ſatisfies my reaſon. — Your argument proceeds on a ſuppoſition, that what ſatisfies your reaſon

ſon is true? It does.—Do you not then take it for granted, that your reaſon is not a fallacious, but a true faculty? This muſt be taken for granted, otherwiſe the argument is good for nothing.—And if ſo, your argument proceeds on a ſuppoſition, that the point to be proved is true. In a word, you pretend to prove the truth of our natural faculties, by an argument which evidently and neceſſarily ſuppoſes their truth. Your philoſophy is built on ſophiſms; how then can it be according to common ſenſe?

As this philoſopher doubted where he ought to have been confident, ſo he is often confident where he ought to doubt. He admits not his own exiſtence, till he thinks he has proved it; yet his ſyſtem is replete with hypotheſes taken for granted, without proof, almoſt without examination. He ſets out with the profeſſion of univerſal ſcepticiſm; but many of his theories are founded in the moſt unphiloſophical credulity. Had he taken a little more for granted, he would have proved a great deal more; he takes almoſt nothing for granted, (I ſpeak of what he profeſſes, not of what he performs); and

therefore he proves nothing. In geometry, however, he is rational and ingenious; there are ſome curious remarks in his diſcourſe on the paſſions; his phyſics are fanciful and plauſible; his treatiſe on muſic perſpicuous, though ſuperficial; a lively imagination ſeems to have been his chief talent, want of knowledge in the grounds of evidence his principal defect.

We are informed by Father MALEBRANCHE, that the ſenſes were at firſt as honeſt faculties as one could deſire to be endued with, till after they were debauched by original ſin; an adventure, from which they contracted ſuch an invincible propenſity to cheating, that they are now continually lying in wait to deceive us. But there is in man, it ſeems, a certain clear-ſighted, ſtout, old faculty, called *reaſon*, which, without being deceived by appearances, keeps an eye upon the rogues, and often proves too cunning for them. MALEBRANCHE therefore adviſeth us to doubt with all our might. "If "a man hath only learned to doubt," ſays he, "let him not imagine that he hath "made

"made an inconſiderable progreſs *." Progreſs! in what?—in ſcience? Is it not a contradiction, or at leaſt an inconſiſtency, in terms, to ſay that a man makes progreſs in ſcience by doubting †? If one were to aſk the way to Dublin, and to receive for anſwer, that he ought firſt of all to ſit down; for that if he had only learned to ſit ſtill, he might be aſſured, that he had made no inconſiderable progreſs in his journey; I ſuppoſe he would hardly trouble his informer with a ſecond queſtion.

It is true, this author makes a diſtinction between the doubts of paſſion, brutality, and blindneſs, and thoſe of prudence, diſtruſt, and penetration: the former, ſays he, are the doubts of Academics and Atheiſts; the latter are the doubts of the true philoſopher ‡. It is true alſo, that he allows us to give an entire conſent to

* Qu'on ne s'imagine pas, que l'on ait peu avancé, ſi on a ſeulement appris à douter.

La Recherche de la Verité, liv. 1. ch. 20.

† Eſt contrarietas inter verba *ſcivi*, et *dubia ſunt*.

Des Cartes, Object. et Reſponſ. ſeptimæ.

‡ Recherche de la Verité, liv. 1. ch. 20. ſect. 3.

the

the things that appear entirely evident *. But he adopts, notwithſtanding, the principles of DES CARTES' firſt philoſophy, That we ought to begin our inquiries with univerſal doubt, taking only our own conſciouſneſs for granted, and thence inferring our exiſtence, and the exiſtence of God, and proving, from the divine veracity, that our faculties are not fallacious. Where-ever it is poſſible that a deluding ſpirit may deceive us, there, ſays MALEBRANCHE, we ought to doubt †; but a deluding ſpirit may deceive us where-ever our memory is employed in reaſoning; therefore, in all ſuch reaſonings, there may be error. In a word, there may be error in reaſoning of every kind; for without memory there can be no reaſoning: but in the truths diſcovered by a ſingle glance, (*connoiſſances de ſimple vuë*), ſuch as this, That two and two make four, it is not poſſible, he ſays,

* Qu'on ne doit jamais donner un conſentement entier, qu' à des choſes qui paroiſſent entierement evidentes. *Recherche de la Verité, liv.* 1. *ch.* 20. *ſect.* 3. —— This is indeed a rational ſcepticiſm, ſuch as Ariſtotle recommends, and every friend to truth muſt approve.

† Id. liv. 6. ch. 6.

for

for a deluding god, (*dieu trompeur*), however powerful, to deceive him.—It is eaſy to ſee, that ſuch doctrines muſt lead either to ſophiſtry, or to univerſal ſcepticiſm, or rather to both. For if a demonſtrated concluſion may be falſe for any thing I know to the contrary, an axiom may be ſo too: my belief of the firſt is not leſs neceſſary than my belief of the laſt. Intuition is, of all evidence, the cleareſt, and moſt immediately convincing; but demonſtration produces abſolute certainty, and full conviction, in the mind of him who underſtands it *.—MALEBRANCHE, indeed, acknowledges, that we may reaſon when once we know that God is no deceiver: but this, he ſays, muſt be known at one glance, (that is, I ſuppoſe, intuitively), or it cannot be known at all; for all reaſoning on this ſubject may be fallacious †.

But I do not pretend to unfold all the

* See the ſecond chapter of the firſt book of the latter Analytics of Ariſtotle. The great philoſopher holds, that intuition and demonſtration are equally productive of knowledge; though the former be the firſt, the cleareſt, and moſt immediate evidence.

† Recherche de la Verité, liv. 6. ch. 6.

falſe

falſe and ſceptical principles of this author's philoſophy. To confeſs the truth, I do not well underſtand it. He is generally myſtical, often, if I miſtake not, ſelf-contradictory; and his genius is ſtrangely warped by a ſuperſtitious veneration for the abſurdities of Popery. He rejects the evidence of ſenſe, becauſe it ſeems repugnant to his reaſon; he admits the truth of tranſubſtantiation, though certainly repugnant both to reaſon and ſenſe. Of Ariſtotle, and Seneca, and the other ancient philoſophers, he ſays, that their lights are nothing but thick darkneſs, and their moſt illuſtrious virtues nothing but intolerable pride *. Fy, M. MALEBRANCHE! Popery, with all its abſurdities, requires not from its adherents ſo uncandid, and ſo illiberal, a declaration. An Ariſtotelian, of your own religion and country, and nearly of your own age, delivers a very different doctrine: "Ariſtote eſt monté ſur la "philoſophie par les degrez du mouve-"ment juſques à la connoiſſance d'un ſeul "premier moteur, qui eſt Dieu.—Il faut "apprendre la ſcience, pour venir à la con-"noiſſance des choſes divines, autrement

* Recherche de la Verité, liv. 6. ch. 6.

"nous

"nous nous tromperions. — La philoſo-
"phie et la theologie ſont teſmoins l'une
"à l'autre, qui s'entreconfirment, et font
"mieux connoiſtre la verité: celle-cy nous
"enſeigne ce que nous devons croire, et
"la raiſon fait que nous le croyons plus
"facilement, et avec plus de fermeté. El-
"les ſont deux lumieres qui rendent plus
"de clarté eſtant unies enſemble. — Moyſe
"apprit la ſcience des Egyptiens, et Daniel
"en Babylone celle des Caldeens *." This learned and judicious Peripatetic goes on to ſhow, that Jerome, Auguſtine, Gregory of Nice, and Clemens Alexandrinus, entertained the ſame honourable opinion of the ancient philoſophers. If DES CARTES, and his diſciple MALEBRANCHE, had ſtudied the ancients more, and indulged their own imagination leſs, they would have made a better figure in philoſophy, and done much more ſervice to mankind. But it was their aim to decry the ancients as much as poſſible: and ever ſince their time, it has been too much the faſhion to overlook the diſcoveries of former ages, as

* Introduction à la Philoſophie, chap. 9. par T. Bouju. Paris, 1614. folio.

altogether unneceſſary for advancing the improvement of the preſent. MALEBRANCHE often inveighs againſt Ariſtotle, in particular, with the moſt virulent bitterneſs; and affects, on all occaſions, to treat him with ſupreme contempt *. Had this great ancient employed his genius in the ſubverſion of virtue, or in eſtabliſhing tenets incompatible with the principles of natural religion, he would have deſerved the ſevereſt cenſure. But MALEBRANCHE lays nothing of this kind to his charge; he only finds him guilty of ſome ſpeculative errors in natural philoſophy. Ariſtotle was not exempted from that fallibility which is incident to human nature; yet it would not be amiſs, if our modern wits would ſtudy him a little, before they venture to decide ſo poſitively on his abilities and character. It is obſervable, that he is moſt admired by thoſe who beſt underſtand him. Now, the contrary is true of our modern ſceptics: they are moſt admired by thoſe who read them leaſt, and who take their characters upon truſt, as they find them delivered in coffeehouſes

* See Recherche de la Verité, liv. 6. ch. 5.

and

and drawing-rooms, and other places of faſhionable converſation, whoſe doctrines do ſo much honour to the virtue and good ſenſe of this enlightened age.

I have ſometimes heard the principles of the Socratic ſchool urged as a precedent to juſtify modern ſcepticiſm. Modern ſcepticiſm is of two kinds, unlike in their natures, though the one be the foundation of the other. DES CARTES begins with univerſal doubt, that in the end he may arrive at conviction; HUME begins with hypotheſis, and ends with univerſal doubt. Now, does not Ariſtotle propoſe, that all inveſtigation ſhould begin with doubt? And does not Socrates affirm, that he knows nothing certainly, except his own ignorance?

All this is true. Ariſtotle propoſes, that inveſtigation ſhould begin with doubt *. He compares doubting to a knot, which it is the end of inveſtigation to diſintangle; and there can be no ſolution, where there is no knot or difficulty to be ſolved. But Ariſtotle's doubt is quite of a different nature from that of DES CARTES. The

* Ariſtot. Metaphyſ. lib. 3. cap. 1. Δύσις δ' ἐκ ἔστιν ἀγνοῦντα τὸν δεσμὸν, &c.

former admits as true whatever is ſelf-evident, without ſeeking to prove it; nay, he affirms, that thoſe men who attempt to prove ſelf-evident principles, or who think that ſuch principles may be proved, are ignorant of the nature of proof *. It differs alſo moſt eſſentially from the ſcepticiſm of Mr HUME. The reaſonings of this author all terminate in doubt; whereas Ariſtotle's conſtant aim is, to diſcover truth, and eſtabliſh conviction. He defines philoſophy *the ſcience of Truth*; divides it into ſpeculative and practical; and expreſsly declares, that truth is the end of the former, and action of the latter †.

Cicero, in order to compliment a ſect, of which, however, he was not a conſiſtent diſciple, aſcribes to Socrates a very high degree of ſcepticiſm ‡; making his principles nearly the ſame with thoſe of the New Academy, who profeſſed to believe, that all things were ſo involved in dark-

* Ariſtot. Metaphyſ. lib. 4. cap. 4.

† Ὀρθῶς δ' ἔχει καὶ τὸ καλέσαι τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιστήμην τῆς ἀληθείας· θεωρητικῆς μὲν γὰρ τέλος ἀλήθεια· πρακτικῆς δ' ἔργον.

Metaphyſ. lib. 2. cap. 1.

‡ Cic. Academ. lib. 1. cap. 12.

neſs,

neſs, that nothing could be known with certainty. The only difference between them, according to Cicero in this place, is, that Socrates affirmed, that he knew nothing, except his own ignorance; whereas Arceſilas, and the reſt of the New Academy, held, that man could know nothing, not even his own ignorance, with certainty; and therefore, that affirmation of every kind is abſurd and unphiloſophical. But we need not take this on the authority of Cicero, as we have acceſs to the ſame original authors from whom he received his information. And if we conſult them, particularly Xenophon, the moſt unexceptionable of them all in point of veracity, we ſhall find, that the reaſonings, the ſentiments, and the conduct, of Socrates, are altogether incompatible with univerſal ſcepticiſm. The firſt ſcience that engaged his attention was natural philoſophy; which, as it was taught in thoſe days by Zeno, Anaxagoras, and Xenophanes, had very little to recommend it to a man of ſenſe and candour. Socrates ſoon relinquiſhed it, from a perſuaſion, that it was at once unprofitable, and founded in uncertainty; and employed the reſt of his life

life in the cultivation of moral philoſophy, a ſcience which to him ſeemed more ſatiſfactory in its evidence, and more uſeful in its application *. So far was he from being ſceptical in regard to the principles of moral duty, that he inculcated them with earneſtneſs where-ever he found opportunity, and thought it incumbent on all men to make themſelves acquainted with them. In his reaſonings, indeed, he did not formally lay down any principle, becauſe it was his method to deduce his concluſions from what was acknowledged by his antagoniſt: but is this any proof, that he himſelf did not believe his own concluſions? Read the ſtory of his life; his conduct never belied his principles: obſerve the manners of our ſceptics; their conduct and principles do mutually and invariably bely one another. Do you ſeek ſtill more convincing evidence, that Socrates felt, believed, and avowed the truth? Read the defence he made before his judges. See you there any ſigns of doubt, heſitation, or fear? any ſuſpicion of the poſſibility of his being in the wrong? any

* Xenoph. Memorab. lib. 1. cap. 1. et lib. 4. cap. 7.

diſſi-

diſſimulation, ſophiſtry, or art? See you not, on the contrary, the utmoſt plainneſs and ſimplicity, the calmeſt and moſt deliberate fortitude, and that noble aſſurance which ſo well becomes the cauſe of truth and virtue? Few men have ſhown ſo firm an attachment to truth, as to lay down their life for its ſake; yet this did Socrates. He made no external profeſſion of any philoſophical creed; but in his death, and through the whole of his life, he ſhowed the ſteadieſt adherence to principle; and his principles were all conſiſtent. Xenophon has recorded many of them; and tells us, in regard to ſome of them, that Socrates ſcrupled not to call thoſe men fools who differed from his opinion *. —The ſophiſts of his age were not ſolicitous to diſcover truth, but only to confute an adverſary, and reaſon plauſibly in behalf of their theories. That they might have the ampler field for this ſort of ſpeculation, they confined themſelves, like our modern metaphyſicians, to general topics, ſuch as the nature of good, of beauty, and ſuch like; on which one may ſay

* Xenoph. Memorab. lib. 1. cap. 1. paſſim.

a great many things without meaning, and offer a great many plauſible arguments without one word of truth. Socrates did much to diſcredit this abuſe of ſcience. In his converſations he did not trouble himſelf with the niceties of artificial logic. His aim was, not to confute an adverſary, nor to guard againſt that verbal confutation which the ſophiſts were perpetually attempting, but to do good to thoſe with whom he converſed, by laying their duty before them in a ſtriking and perſuaſive manner*. He was not fond of reaſoning on abſtract ſubjects, eſpecially when he had to do with a ſophiſt; well knowing that this could anſwer no other purpoſe than to furniſh matter for endleſs and unprofitable logomachy. When, therefore, Ariſtippus aſked him concerning the nature of good †, with a view to confute, or at leaſt to teaſe him, with quibbling evaſions, Socrates declined to anſwer in general terms; and deſired the

* Ἀριστίππου δὲ ἐπιχειροῦντος ἐλέγχειν τὸν Σωκράτη,—βουλόμενος τοὺς συνόντας ὠφελεῖν ὁ Σωκράτης ἀπεκρίνατο, ὥσπερ οἱ φυλαττόμενοι, μὴ ὁ λόγος ἐπαλλαχθῇ, ἀλλ' ὡς ἂν πιστοτάτοις μάλιστα πράττειν τὰ δέοντα.

Xenoph. Memorab. lib. 3. *cap.* 8.

† Id. ibid.

ſophiſt

ſophiſt to limit his queſtion, by confining the word *good* to ſome particular thing. Do you aſk me, ſays he, what is good for a fever, for ſore eyes, or for hunger? No, ſays the ſophiſt. If, replies he, you aſk me concerning the nature of a good which is good for no particular purpoſe, I tell you once for all, that I know of none ſuch, and have no deſires after it. In like manner, he anſwers to the general queſtion concerning beauty, by deſiring his adverſary to confine himſelf to ſome particular kind of beauty. What would the great moraliſt have thought of our modern metaphyſical treatiſes, which ſeem to have nothing elſe in view, but to contrive vain and queſtionable definitions of general ideas! Simple, certain, and uſeful truth, was the conſtant, and the only, object of this philoſopher's inquiry.

True it is, he ſometimes ſaid, that he knew nothing but his own ignorance. And ſurely the higheſt knowledge that human reaſon can attain is extremely limited. Yet man knows ſomething: Socrates was conſcious that he knew ſomething; otherwiſe Xenophon would not have aſſerted, that his opinions concern-

ing God, and Providence, and Religion, and Moral Duty, were well known to all the Athenians *. But Socrates was humble, and made no pretenſions to any thing extraordinary, either in virtue or in knowledge. He profeſſed no ſcience; he inſtructed others, without pedantry, and without parade; exemplifying the beauty and the practicability of virtue, by the innocence and integrity of his life, and by the charms of an inſtructive, though moſt inſinuating, converſation †. I ſhall allow our modern ſceptics to avail themſelves all they can of the authority of DES CARTES and MALEBRANCHE, of Pyrrho and Anaxarchus; but let them not preſume to ſanctify their traſh with the venerable names of Socrates and Ariſtotle.

Cicero ſeems to have been an Academic rather in name than in reality. And I am apt to think, from ſeveral paſſages in his works ‡, that he made choice of this denomination, in order to have a pretence for reaſoning on either ſide of every que-

* Xenoph. Memorab. lib. 1. cap. 1.

† Ibid. cap. 2.

‡ See particularly *De Officiis, lib.* 3. *cap.* 4. *De Fato, cap.* 2.

ſtion,

ſtion, and conſequently an ampler field for a diſplay of his rhetorical talents. To Pyrrho, Herillus, Ariſto, and other ſceptics, who, by aſſerting that all things are indifferent, deſtroy the diſtinction of virtue and vice, he will not allow even the name of philoſopher: nay, he affirms, that it is impudence in ſuch perſons to pretend to it *. "I wiſh," ſays he in another place, "that they who ſuppoſe me a ſcep-"tic were well acquainted with my ſenti-"ments. For I am not one of thoſe whoſe "mind wanders in error, without any fix-"ed principle. What ſort of underſtand-"ing muſt that man poſſeſs, what ſort of "life muſt that man lead, who, by diveſt-"ing himſelf of principle, diveſts himſelf "of the means, both of reaſoning and of "living †!" Let it be obſerved alſo, that when the ſubject of his inquiry is of high importance, as in his books on moral du-

* De officiis, lib. 1. cap. 2.

† Quibus vellem ſatis cognita eſſet noſtra ſententia. Non enim ſumus ii, quorum vagetur animus errore, nec habeat unquam quid ſequatur. Quæ enim eſſet iſta mens, vel quæ vita potius, non modo diſputandi, ſed vivendi ratione ſublata! *Cic. de Officiis, lib. 2. cap. 2.*

ties, and on the nature of the gods, he follows the doctrine of the Dogmatiſts, particularly the Stoics; and aſſerts his moral and religious principles with a warmth and energy which prove him to have been in earneſt.

2. Nothing was further from the intention of LOCKE, than to encourage verbal controverſy, or advance doctrines favourable to ſcepticiſm. To do good to mankind, by inforcing virtue, illuſtrating truth, and vindicating liberty, was his ſincere purpoſe: and he did not labour in vain. His writings are to be reckoned among the few books, that have been productive of real utility to mankind. But candour obliges me to remark, that ſome of his tenets ſeem to be too raſhly admitted, for the ſake of a favourite hypotheſis. That ſome of them have promoted ſcepticiſm, is undeniable. He ſeems indeed to have been ſenſible, that there were inaccuracies in his work; and candidly owns, that "ſome haſty and indi-
"geſted thoughts on a ſubject never before
"conſidered, gave the firſt entrance to his
"Eſſay; which, being begun by chance,
"was continued by intreaty, written by
"incoherent

"incoherent parcels, and after long inter-
"vals of neglect reſumed again, as hu-
"mour or occaſion permitted *."

The firſt book of his Eſſay, which, with ſubmiſſion, I think the worſt, tends to eſtabliſh this dangerous doctrine, That the human mind, previous to education and habit, is as ſuſceptible of any one impreſſion as of any other: a doctrine which, if true, would go near to prove, that truth and virtue are no better than human contrivances; or, at leaſt, that they have nothing permanent in their nature, but may be as changeable as the inclinations and capacities of men; and that, as we underſtand the term, there is no ſuch thing as common ſenſe in the world. Surely, this is not the doctrine that LOCKE meant to eſtabliſh; but his zeal againſt innate ideas, and innate principles, put him off his guard, and made him allow too little to inſtinct, for fear of allowing too much. This controverſy, ſo far as it regards moral ſentiment, we have examined in another place. At preſent we would only obſerve, that if truth be any thing perma-

* Preface to the Eſſay on Human Underſtanding.

nent,

nent, which it muſt be if it be any thing at all, thoſe perceptions or impulſes of underſtanding by which we become conſcious of it, muſt be equally permanent; which they could not be, if they depended on education, and if there were not a law of nature, independent on man, which determines the underſtanding in ſome caſes to believe, in others to diſbelieve. Is it poſſible to imagine, that any courſe of education could ever bring a rational creature to believe, that two and two are equal to three, that he is not the ſame perſon to-day he was yeſterday, that the ground he ſtands on does not exiſt? could make him diſbelieve the teſtimony of his own ſenſes, or that of other men? could make him expect unlike events in like circumſtances? or that the courſe of nature, of which he has hitherto had experience, will be changed, even when he foreſees no cauſe to hinder its continuance? I can no more believe, that education could produce ſuch a depravity of judgement, than that education could make me ſee all human bodies in an inverted poſition, or hear with my noſtrils, or take pleaſure in burning and cutting my fleſh. Why

ſhould

ſhould not our judgements concerning truth be acknowledged to reſult from a bias impreſſed upon the mind by its Creator, as well as our deſire of ſelf-preſervation, our love of ſociety, our reſentment of injury, our joy in the poſſeſſion of good? If theſe judgements be not inſtinctive, I ſhould be glad to know how they come to be univerſal: the modes of ſentiment and behaviour produced by education are uniform only where education is uniform; but there are many truths, the acknowledgement of which is as univerſal as human nature. If theſe judgements be not inſtinctive, I ſhould be glad to know how men find it ſo difficult, or rather impoſſible, to diveſt themſelves of them. The falſe opinions we imbibe from habit and education, may be, and often are, relinquiſhed by thoſe who make a proper uſe of their reaſon; and the man who thus renounceth his former prejudices, upon conviction of their falſity, is applauded by all as a man of candour, ſenſe, and ſpirit; but if a man were to ſuffer himſelf to be argued out of his common ſenſe, the whole world would pronounce him a fool.

The

The ſubſtance, or at leaſt the foundation, of BERKELEY's argument againſt the exiſtence of matter, may be found in LOCKE's Eſſay, and in the *Principia* of DES CARTES. And if this argument be concluſive, it proves that to be falſe which every man muſt neceſſarily believe every moment of his life to be true, and that to be true which no man ſince the foundation of the world was ever capable of believing for a ſingle moment. BERKELEY's doctrine attacks the moſt inconteſtable dictates of common ſenſe; and profeſſeth to demonſtrate, that the cleareſt, moſt deciſive, and moſt general, principles of conviction, are certainly fallacious.

Mr HUME, more ſubtle, and leſs reſerved, than any of his predeceſſors, hath gone ſtill greater lengths in the demolition of common ſenſe; and in its place hath reared a moſt tremendous fabric of doctrine; upon which, if it were not for the flimſineſs of its materials, engines might eaſily be erected, ſufficient to overturn all belief, virtue, and ſcience, from the very foundation. He calls this work, "A Treatiſe "of Human Nature; being an attempt to "introduce the experimental method of "reaſoning

"reaſoning into moral ſubjects." This is, in the ſtyle of Edmund Curll, a taking title-page; but, alas! "Fronti nulla fides!" The whole of this author's ſyſtem is founded on a falſe hypotheſis taken for granted; and whenever a fact contradictory to this falſe hypotheſis occurs to his obſervation, he boldly denies it. This, it ſeems, in his judgement, is experimental reaſoning: in mine, it is juſt the reverſe.

He begins his book with affirming, That all the perceptions of the human mind reſolve themſelves into two claſſes; impreſſions, and ideas; that the latter are all copied from the former; and that an idea differs from its correſpondent impreſſion only in being a weaker perception. Thus, when I ſit by the fire, I have an impreſſion of heat, and I can form an idea of heat when I am ſhivering with cold; in the one caſe I have a ſtronger perception of heat, in the other a weaker. Is there any warmth in this idea of heat? There muſt, according to Mr. Hume's doctrine; only the warmth of the idea is not quite ſo ſtrong as that of the impreſſion. For this profound author repeats it again and again, that an idea is by its very nature

weaker and fainter than an impreſſion, but is in every other reſpect (not only ſimilar, but) the ſame *. Nay, he goes further, and ſays, that whatever is true of the one muſt be acknowledged concerning the other †; and he is ſo confident of the truth of this maxim, that he makes it one of the pillars of his philoſophy. To thoſe who may be inclined to admit this maxim on his authority, I would propoſe a few plain queſtions. Do you feel any, even the leaſt, warmth in the idea of a bonfire, a burning mountain, or the general conflagration? Do you feel more real cold in Virgil's Scythian winter, than in Milton's deſcription of the flames of hell? Do you acknowledge that to be true of the idea of eating, which is certainly true of the impreſſion of it, that it alleviates hunger, fills the belly, and contributes to the ſupport of human life? If you anſwer theſe queſtions in the negative, you deny one of the fundamental principles of Mr HUME's philoſophy. We have a livelier perception of a friend when we ſee him, than when

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 131.

† Ibid. p. 41.

we

we think of him in his abſence. But this is not all: every perſon of a ſound mind knows, that in the one caſe we believe, and are certain, that the object exiſts, and is preſent with us; in the other we believe, and are certain, that the object is not preſent. This, however, Mr HUME muſt deny; for he maintains, that an idea differs from an impreſſion only in being weaker, and in no other reſpect whatſoever.

That every idea ſhould be a copy and reſemblance of the impreſſion whence it is derived; — that, for example, the idea of red ſhould be a red idea; the idea of a roaring lion a roaring idea; the idea of an aſs, a hairy, long-eared, ſluggiſh idea, patient of labour, and much addicted to thiſtles; that the idea of extenſion ſhould be extended, and that of ſolidity ſolid; — that a thought of the mind ſhould be endued with all, or any, of the qualities of matter, — is, in my judgement, inconceivable and impoſſible. Yet Mr HUME takes it for granted; and it is another of his fundamental maxims. Such is the credulity of Scepticiſm!

If every idea be an exact reſemblance of its correſpondent impreſſion, (or object;

for theſe terms, according to this author, amount to the ſame thing *);—if the idea of whiteneſs be white, of ſolidity ſolid, and of extenſion extended, as the ſame author allows †,—then the idea of a line the ſhorteſt that ſenſe can perceive, muſt be equal in length to the line itſelf; for if ſhorter, it would be imperceptible; and it will not be ſaid, either that an imperceptible idea can be perceived, or that the idea of an imperceptible object can be formed:—and the idea of a line a hundred times as long, muſt be a hundred times as long as the former idea; for if ſhorter, it would be the idea, not of this, but of ſome other ſhorter line. And ſo it clearly follows, nay it admits of mathematical demonſtration, that the idea of an inch is really an inch long; and that of a mile, a mile long. In a word, every idea of any particular extenſion is equal in length to the extended object. The ſame reaſoning holds good in regard to the other dimenſions of breadth and thickneſs. All ideas, therefore, of ſolid objects, are

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 1. 2. 362.

† Ibid. p. 416. 417.

(according

(according to HUME's philoſophy) equal in magnitude and ſolidity to the objects themſelves. Now mark the conſequences. I am juſt now in an apartment containing a thouſand cubic feet, being ten feet ſquare, and ten high; the door and windows are ſhut, as well as my eyes and ears. Mr HUME will allow, that, in this ſituation, I may form ideas, not only of the viſible appearance, but alſo of the real tangible magnitude of the whole houſe, of a firſt-rate man of war, of St Paul's cathedral, or even of a much larger object. But the ſolid magnitude of theſe ideas is equal to the ſolid magnitude of the objects from which they are copied: therefore I have now preſent with me an idea, that is, a ſolid extended thing, whoſe dimenſions extend to a million of cubic feet at leaſt. The queſtion now is, where is this thing placed? for a place it certainly muſt have, and a pretty large one too. I ſhould anſwer, In my mind; for I know not where elſe the ideas of my mind can be ſo conveniently depoſited. Now my mind is lodged in a body of no extraordinary dimenſions, and my body is contained in a room ten feet ſquare and ten feet high.

high. It ſeems then, that, into this room, I have it in my power at pleaſure to introduce a ſolid object a thouſand, or ten thouſand, times larger than the room itſelf. I contemplate it a while, and then, by another volition, ſend it a packing, to make way for another object of equal or ſuperior magnitude. Nay, in no larger vehicle than a common poſt-chaiſe, I can tranſport from one end of the kingdom to the other, a building equal to the largeſt Egyptian pyramid, and a mountain as big as Etna, or the peak of Teneriffe.—Take care, ye diſciples of HUME, and be very well adviſed before ye reject this myſtery as impoſſible and incomprehenſible. It is geometrically deduced from the principles, nay from the firſt principles, of your maſter. By denying this, you give his ſyſtem ſuch a ſtab as it cannot poſſibly ſurvive.

Say, ye candid and intelligent, what are we to expect from a logical and ſyſtematic treatiſe, founded on a ſuppoſition, that a part may be ten or a hundred thouſand times greater than the whole? Shall we expect truth? Then it muſt be inferred by falſe reaſoning.—Shall we expect legitimate

timate reaſoning? Then ſurely the inferences muſt be falſe.—Indeed, though I cannot much admire this author's ſagacity on the preſent occaſion, I muſt confeſs myſelf not a little aſtoniſhed at his courage. A witch going to ſea in an egg-ſhell, or preparing to take a trip through the air on a broomſtick, is really a ſurpriſing phenomenon; but it is nothing to Mr HUME, on ſuch a bottom, "launching "out (as he well expreſſeth it) into the im-"menſe depths of philoſophy."

To multiply illuſtrations for the confutation of ſo glaring an abſurdity, is really ridiculous. I therefore leave it to the reader to determine, whether, if this doctrine of ſolid and extended ideas be true, it will not follow, that the idea of a roaring lion muſt emit audible ſound, almoſt, if not altogether, as loud, and as terrible, as the royal beaſt in perſon could exhibit; —that two ideal bottles of brandy will intoxicate as far at leaſt as two genuine bottles of wine;—and that I muſt be greatly hurt, if not daſhed to pieces, if I am ſo imprudent, as to form only the idea of a bomb burſting under my feet. For hath not our author ſaid, that "impreſſions

"and

" and ideas comprehend all the percep-
" tions (or objects) of the human mind;
" that whatſoever is true of the one muſt
" be acknowledged concerning the other;
" nay, that they are in every reſpect the
" ſame, except that the former ſtrike with
" more force than the latter?"

The abſurdity and inconceivableneſs of the diſtinction between objects and perceptions, is another of our author's capital doctrines. " Philoſophers," ſays he, " have diſtinguiſhed between objects, and " perceptions of the ſenſes: but this diſ-" tinction is not comprehended by the " generality *." Now how are we to know,

* See Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 353. 365. The word *perception* (and the ſame is true of the words *ſenſation*, *ſmell*, *taſte*, and many others) has, in common language, two, and ſometimes three, diſtinct ſignifications. It means, 1. The thing perceived. Thus we ſpeak of the *taſte* of a fig, the *ſmell* of a roſe. 2. The power or faculty perceiving; as when we ſay, " I have " loſt my *ſmell* by a ſevere cold, and therefore my *taſte* " is not ſo quick as uſual " 3. It ſometimes denotes that impulſe or impreſſion which is communicated to the mind by the external object operating upon it through the organ of ſenſation. Thus we ſpeak of a *ſweet* or *bitter taſte*, a *diſtinct* or *confuſed*, a *clear* or *obſcure*, *ſenſation* or *perception*. Moſt of our ſceptical philoſophers have either been ignorant of, or inattentive to, this diſtinction:

MALE-

know, whether this diſtinction be conceived and acknowledged by the generality? If we put the queſtion to any of them, we ſhall find it no eaſy matter to make ourſelves underſtood, and, after all, perhaps be laughed at for our pains. Shall we reaſon *a priori* about their ſentiments and comprehenſions? This is often Mr HUME's method; but it is neither philoſophical nor fair. Will you allow me to reckon myſelf one of the generality? Then I declare, for my own part, that I do comprehend and acknowledge this diſtinction, and have done ſo ever ſince I was capable of reflection. I remember, when a child, to have had my fingers ſcorched with burning coals, and ſtung by bees: but I never confounded the object with the perception; I never thought that the

MALEBRANCHE, indeed, (liv. 1. ch. 10.), ſeems to have had ſome notion of it; but either I do not underſtand this author, or there is a ſtrange obſcurity and want of preciſion in almoſt every thing he ſays. Mr HUME's philoſophy does not allow this to be a rational diſtinction; ſo that it is impoſſible to know preciſely what he means by the word *perception* in this and many other places. I have proved, however, that his aſſertion is falſe, whatever ſenſe (conſiſtent with common uſe) we affix to the word.

pain I felt could either make honey or melt lead.—The inſtance, you ſay, is ſomewhat equivocal.—Well, then, I hope the following is explicit enough.—Suppoſe me to addreſs the common people in theſe words: "I ſee a ſtrange ſight a little way "off; but my ſight is weak, ſo that I ſee "it imperfectly; let me go nearer, that I "may have a more diſtinct ſight of it."——If the generality be at all incapable of diſtinguiſhing between the object and the perception, this incapacity will doubtleſs diſcover itſelf moſt, when ambiguous words are uſed on purpoſe to confound their ideas; if their ideas on this ſubject are not confounded even by ambiguous language, there is reaſon to think, that they are extremely clear, diſtinct, and accurate. Now I have here propoſed a ſentence, in which there is a ſtudied ambiguity of language; and yet I maintain, that every perſon of common ſenſe, who underſtands Engliſh, will inſtantly, on hearing theſe words, perceive, that by the word *ſight* I mean, in the firſt clauſe, the thing ſeen; in the ſecond, the power, or perhaps the organ, of ſeeing; in the third, the perception itſelf, as diſtinguiſhed both

from

from the percipient faculty, and from the viſible object. If one of the multitude, on hearing me pronounce this ſentence, were to reply as follows; "The ſight is not at "all ſtrange; it is a man on horſeback: "but your ſight muſt needs be weak, as "you are lately recovered from ſickneſs: "however, if you wait a little till the man "and horſe, which are now in the ſhade, "come into the ſunſhine, you will then have "a much more diſtinct ſight of them:"— I would aſk, Is the ſtudy of any part of philoſophy neceſſary to make a man comprehend the meaning of theſe two ſentences? Is there any thing abſurd or unintelligible either in the former or in the latter? Is there any thing in the reply, that ſeems to exceed the capacity of the vulgar, and ſuppoſes them more acute than they really are? If there be not, and I am certain there is not, here is an unqueſtionable proof, that the generality, and indeed all men whom metaphyſic hath not deprived of their ſenſes, do diſtinguiſh between the object perceived, the faculty perceiving, and the perception or impulſe communicated by the external object to the mind through the organ of

ſenſation. What though all the three are ſometimes expreſſed by the ſame name? This only ſhows, that accuracy of language is not always neceſſary for anſwering the common purpoſes of life. If the ideas of the vulgar are ſufficiently diſtinct notwithſtanding, what ſhall we ſay of that philoſopher, whoſe ideas are really confounded by this inaccuracy, and who, becauſe there is no difference in the ſigns, imagines that there is none in the things ſignified! That the underſtanding of ſuch a philoſopher is not a vulgar one, will be readily allowed; whether it exceeds, or falls ſhort, let the reader determine *.

This

* Mr HUME is not always conſiſtent with himſelf in affirming, that the vulgar do not comprehend the diſtinction between perceptions and objects. "It is not," he ſays, vol. 1. p. 337. "by arguments, that children, "peaſants, and the greateſt part of mankind, are indu-"ced to attribute objects to ſome impreſſions, and deny "them to others."—So! it ſeems the greateſt part of mankind do acknowledge a diſtinction between objects and perceptions. "Accordingly we find, that all the "concluſions which the vulgar form on this head, are "directly contrary to thoſe which are confirmed by phi-"loſophy."—The more ſhame to that philoſophy! ſay I.—"For philoſophy informs us, that every thing which "appears

This author's method of inveſtigation is no leſs curious than his fundamental principles. There are many notions in the human mind, of which it is not eaſy per-

" appears to the mind, is nothing but a perception, and " is interrupted, and dependent on the mind; whereas " the vulgar confound perceptions and objects,"—that is, I ſuppoſe, do not diſtinguiſh the former from the latter.—How! in the laſt ſentence it was ſaid, that the greateſt part of mankind do diſtinguiſh between impreſſions (which are a ſpecies of perceptions) and objects,— " and attribute a diſtinct continued exiſtence to the very " things they feel or ſee."— So, now again the objects have a diſtinct continued exiſtence; that is, are ſomething different from perceptions, which every body knows have no continued exiſtence. Here Mr HUME, within the compaſs of half a page, contradicts himſelf, and contradicts that contradiction, and finally acquieſces in the firſt contradiction. To hunt ſuch a writer through ſo many ſhiftings and doublings, is not worth the reader's while nor mine. I hope we both know how to employ our time to better purpoſe. How often our author may affirm and deny, and deny and affirm, this doctrine, in the courſe of his work, I neither know nor care: it is certain, that, upon the whole, he holds the diſtinction between objects and perceptions to be *unreaſonable*, (p. 338.), *unphiloſophical*, (ibid.), and *unſupported by the evidence of ſenſe*, (p. 330.—337.)—And indeed, when this diſtinction, as we have explained it, is acknowledged, and attended to, all BERKELEY's pretended demonſtration of the non-exiſtence of matter, and all HUME's reaſonings againſt the exiſtence both of matter and ſpirit, appear to be no better than a play upon words. For this key unlocks that whole myſtery of ſophiſtry and quibble.

haps

haps to explain the origin. If you can deſcribe in words what were the circumſtances in which you received an impreſſion of any particular notion, it is well; Mr HUME will allow, that you may form an idea of it: but if you cannot do this, then, ſays he, there is no ſuch notion in your mind; for all perceptions are either impreſſions or ideas, and it is not poſſible for us ſo much as to conceive any thing ſpecifically different from ideas and impreſſions *: now all ideas are copied from impreſſions; therefore you can have no idea nor conception of any thing of which you have not received an impreſſion.—All mankind have a notion of power or energy. No, ſays Mr HUME; an impreſſion of power or energy was never received by any man, and therefore an idea of it can never be formed in the human mind. If you inſiſt on your experience and conſciouſneſs of power, it is all a miſtake; his hypotheſis admits not the idea of power, and therefore there is no ſuch idea †.—All mankind have an idea of ſelf.

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 123.

† Ibid. p. 282.

That

That I deny, ſays Mr HUME; I maintain, that no man ever had, or can have, an impreſſion of ſelf; and therefore no man can form any idea of it *. If you perſiſt, and ſay, that certainly you have ſome notion or idea of yourſelf:—My dear Sir, ſays he, you do not conſider, that this aſſertion contradicts my hypotheſis of impreſſions and ideas; how then is it poſſible it ſhould be true! This, it ſeems, is experimental reaſoning!

But though Mr HUME deny, that I have any notion of ſelf, ſurely the man does not mean to affirm, that I do not exiſt, or that I have no notion of myſelf as an exiſtent being. In truth, it is not eaſy to ſay what he means on this ſubject. Moſt philoſophical ſubjects become obſcure in the hands of this author; for he has a notable talent at puzzling his readers and himſelf: but when he treats of conſciouſneſs, of perſonal identity, and of the nature of the ſoul, he expreſſeth himſelf ſo ſtrangely, that his words either have no meaning, or imply a contradiction. "The queſtion," ſays he,

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 437. 438.

"concerning

" concerning the ſubſtance of the ſoul is " unintelligible *." — Well, Sir, if you think ſo, you may let it alone. — No; that muſt not be neither. " What we call " a *mind*, is nothing but a heap or collec- " tion of different perceptions (or objects) " united together by certain relations, and " ſuppoſed, though falſely, to be endowed " with perfect ſimplicity and identity †. " — If any one, upon ſerious and unpre- " judiced reflection, thinks he has a diffe- " rent notion of himſelf, I muſt confeſs I " can reaſon with him no longer. All I " can allow him is, that he may be in the " right as well as I, and that we are eſſen- " tially different in this particular. He " may perhaps perceive ſomething ſimple " and continued, which he calls *himſelf*; " though I am certain there is no ſuch " principle in me. But ſetting aſide ſome " metaphyſicians of this kind," — that is, who feel and believe, that they have a ſoul, — " I may venture to affirm of the " reſt of mankind, that they are nothing " but a bundle or collection of different

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 434. 435.

† Ibid. p. 361. 362.

" perceptions,

"perceptions, which ſucceed each other "with inconceivable rapidity, and are in "a perpetual flux and movement.—There "is properly no ſimplicity in the mind at "one time, nor identity in different "[times], whatever natural propenſion we "may have to imagine that ſimplicity and "identity.—They are the ſucceſſive per-"ceptions only that conſtitute the mind *."

If theſe words have any meaning, it is this: My ſoul (or rather that which I call my ſoul) is not one ſimple thing, nor is it the ſame thing to-day it was yeſterday; nay, it is not the ſame this moment it was the laſt; it is nothing but a maſs, collection, heap, or bundle, of different perceptions, or objects, that fleet away in ſucceſſion, with inconceivable rapidity, perpetually changing, and perpetually in motion. There may be ſome metaphyſicians to whoſe ſouls this deſcription cannot be applied; but I (Mr HUME) am certain, that this is a true and complete deſcription of my ſoul, and of the ſoul of every other individual of the human race, thoſe few metaphyſicians excepted.

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 438. 439. 440.

That body has no exiſtence, but as a bundle of perceptions, whoſe exiſtence conſiſts in their being perceived, our author all along maintains. He now affirms, that the ſoul, in like manner, is a bundle of perceptions, and nothing elſe. It follows, then, that there is nothing in the univerſe but impreſſions and ideas; all poſſible perceptions being comprehended in thoſe two claſſes. This philoſophy admits of no other exiſtence whatſoever, not even of a percipient being to perceive theſe perceptions. So that we are now arrived at the height of human wiſdom, that intellectual eminence, from whence there is a full proſpect of all that we can reaſonably believe to exiſt, and of all that can poſſibly become the object of our knowledge. Alas! what is become of the magnificence of external nature, and the wonders of intellectual energy, the immortal beauties of truth and virtue, and the triumphs of a good conſcience! Where now the warmth of benevolence, the fire of generoſity, the exultations of hope, the tranquil ecſtaſy of devotion, and the pang of ſympathetic delight! All, around, above, and beneath, is one vaſt inanity, or

or rather an enormous chaos, encompaſſed with darkneſs univerſally and eternally impenetrable. Body and ſpirit are utterly annihilated; and there remains nothing (for we muſt again deſcend into the jargon of metaphyſic) but a vaſt collection, bundle, maſs, or heap, of unperceived perceptions.

Such, if Mr HUME's words have any meaning, is the reſult of his ſyſtem. And what is this reſult? If he or his admirers can prove, that there is a poſſibility of expreſſing it in words which do not imply a contradiction, I will not call it nonſenſe. If he or they can prove, that it is compatible with any one acknowledged truth in philoſophy, in morals, in religion natural or revealed, I will not call it impious. If he or they can prove, that it does not ariſe *from common facts miſrepreſented*, and *common words miſunderſtood*, I ſhall admit that it may have ariſen from accurate obſervation, candid and liberal inquiry, perfect knowledge of human nature, and the enlarged views of true philoſophic genius.

SECT. II.

Of the Non-exiſtence of Matter.

IN the preceding ſection I have taken a ſlight ſurvey of the principles, and method of inveſtigation, adopted by the moſt celebrated promoters of modern ſcepticiſm. And it appears, that they have not attended to the diſtinction of reaſon and common ſenſe, as explained in the firſt part of this Eſſay, and as acknowledged by mathematicians and natural philoſophers. Erroneous, abſurd, and ſelf-contradictory notions, have been the conſequence. And now, by entering into a more particular detail, we might eaſily ſhow, that many of thoſe abſurdities that diſgrace the philoſophy of human nature, would never have exiſted, if men had acknowledged and attended to this diſtinction; regulating their inquiries by the criterion above mentioned, and never proſecuting any chain of argument beyond the ſelf-evident principles of common ſenſe. We ſhall

confine

confine ourſelves to two inſtances; one of which is connected with the evidence of external ſenſe, and the other with that of internal.

That matter or body hath a real, ſeparate, independent exiſtence; that there is a real ſun above us, a real air around us, and a real earth under our feet,—has been the univerſal belief of all men who were not mad, ever ſince the creation. This is believed, not becauſe it is or can be proved by argument, but becauſe the conſtitution of our nature is ſuch that we muſt believe it. There is the ſame ground for belief in this inſtance, that there is for the belief of the following propoſitions: I exiſt; Whatever is, is; Two and two make four. It is abſurd, nay, it is impoſſible, to believe the contrary. I can as eaſily believe, that I do not exiſt, that two and two are equal to three, that whatever is, is not; as I can believe, that I have neither hands, nor feet, nor head, nor cloaths, nor houſe, nor country, nor acquaintance; that the ſun, moon, and ſtars, and ocean, and tempeſt, thunder and lightning, mountains, rivers, and cities, have no exiſtence but as ideas or thoughts in my mind, and,

independent

independent on me and my faculties, do not exiſt at all, and could not poſſibly exiſt if I were to be annihilated; that fire, and burning, and pain, which I feel, and the recollection of pain that is paſt, and the idea of pain which I never felt, are all in the ſame ſenſe ideas or perceptions in my mind, and nothing elſe; that the qualities of matter are not qualities of matter, but affections of ſpirit; and that I have no evidence that any being exiſts in nature but myſelf. Philoſophers may ſay what they pleaſe; and the world, who are apt enough to admire what is monſtrous, may give them credit; but I affirm, that it is not in the power, either of wit or of madneſs, to contrive any conceit more inconſiſtent, more abſurd, and more nonſenſical, than this, That the material world hath no exiſtence but in my mind. *

Des Cartes acknowledges, that every perſon muſt be perſuaded of the exiſtence of a material world: but he will not allow this point to be ſelf-evident, or ſo certain as not to admit of doubt; becauſe, ſays he, we find in experience, that our ſenſes are ſometimes in an error, and becauſe in dreams we often miſtake ideas for external things

things really exiſting. He therefore begins his philoſophy of bodies with a formal proof of the exiſtence of body *.

But however imperfect, and however fallacious, we acknowledge our ſenſes to be in other matters, it is certain, that no man ever thought them fallacious in regard to the exiſtence of body; nay, every man of a ſound mind is, by the law of his nature, convinced, that, in this reſpect at leaſt, they are not, and cannot poſſibly be miſtaken. Men have ſometimes been deceived by ſophiſtical argument, becauſe the human underſtanding is in ſome, and indeed in many, reſpects fallible; but does it follow, that we cannot, without proof, be certain of any thing, not even of our own exiſtence, nor of the truth of a geometrical axiom? Some diſeaſes are ſo fatal to the mind, as to confound mens notions even of their own identity; but does it follow, that I cannot be certain of my being the ſame perſon to-day I was yeſterday, and twenty years ago, till I have firſt proved this point by argument? And becauſe we are ſometimes deceived by our

* Carteſii Principia, part. 1. § 4. part. 2. § 1.

ſenſes,

ſenſes, does it therefore follow, that we never are certain of our not being deceived by them, till we have firſt convinced ourſelves by reaſoning that they are not deceitful?—If a Carteſian can prove, that there have been a few perſons of ſound underſtanding, who, from a conviction of the deceitfulneſs of their ſenſes, have really diſbelieved, or ſeriouſly doubted, the exiſtence of a material world, I ſhall allow a conviction of this deceitfulneſs to be a ſufficient ground for ſuch doubt or diſbelief, in one or a few inſtances; and if he can prove, that ſuch doubt or diſbelief hath at any time been general among mankind, I ſhall allow that it may poſſibly be ſo again: but if it be certain, as I think it is, that no man of a ſound mind, however ſuſpicious of the veracity of his ſenſes, ever did or could really diſbelieve, or ſeriouſly doubt, the exiſtence of a material world, then is this point ſelf-evident, and a principle of common ſenſe, even on the ſuppoſition that our ſenſes are as deceitful as DES CARTES and MALEBRANCHE chuſe to repreſent them. But we have formerly proved, that our ſenſes are never ſuppoſed to be fallacious, except when

when we are conſcious, that our experience is partial, or our obſervation inaccurate; and that, even then, the fallacy is detected, and rectified, only by the evidence of ſenſe placed in circumſtances more favourable to accurate obſervation. In regard to the exiſtence of matter, there cannot poſſibly be a ſuſpicion, that our obſervation is inaccurate, or our experience partial; and therefore it is not poſſible, that ever we ſhould diſtruſt our ſenſes in this particular. If it were poſſible, our diſtruſt could never be removed either by reaſoning or by experience.

As to the ſuſpicion againſt the exiſtence of matter that is ſuppoſed to ariſe from our experience of the deluſions of dreaming, we obſerve, in the firſt place, that if this be allowed a ſufficient ground for ſuſpecting, that our waking perceptions are equally deluſive, there is at once an end of all truth, reaſoning, and common ſenſe. That I am at preſent awake, and not aſleep, I certainly know: but I cannot prove it; for there is no criterion for diſtinguiſhing dreaming fancies from waking perceptions, more evident, than that I am now awake, which is the point in

queſtion; and, as we have often remarked, it is eſſential to every proof, to be more evident than that which is to be proved. That I am now awake, muſt therefore carry its own evidence along with it; if it be evident at all, it muſt be ſelf-evident. And ſo it is: we may miſtake dreams for realities, but no rational being ever miſtook a reality for a dream. Could we preſerve our underſtanding and memory in ſleep, we ſhould probably be ſenſible, that the appearances of our dreams are all deluſive: which in fact is ſometimes the caſe; at leaſt I have ſometimes been conſcious, that my dream was a dream; and when it was diſagreeable, have actually made efforts to awake myſelf, which have ſucceeded. But ſleep has a wonderful power over all our faculties. Sometimes we ſeem to have entirely loſt our moral faculty; as when we dream of committing, without ſcruple or remorſe, what we could hardly think of when awake without horror. Sometimes memory is extinguiſhed; as when we dream of converſing with our departed friends, without remembering any thing of their death, though it was perhaps one of the moſt ſtriking incidents

dents we had ever experienced, and though it is ſeldom or never out of our thoughts when we are awake. Sometimes our underſtanding ſeems to have quite forſaken us; as when we dream of talking with a dead friend, remembering at the ſame time that he is dead, and yet being conſcious of nothing abſurd or unuſual in the circumſtance of converſing with a dead man. Conſidering theſe and the other effects of ſleep upon the mind, we need not be ſurpriſed, that it ſhould cauſe us to miſtake our own ideas for real things, and be affected with thoſe in the ſame manner as with theſe. But the moment we awake, and recover the uſe of our faculties, we become ſenſible, that the dream was a deluſion, and that the objects which now ſolicit our notice are real. To demand a reaſon for the implicit confidence we repoſe in our waking perceptions; or to deſire us to prove, that things are as they appear to our waking ſenſes, and not as they appear to us in ſleep, is as unreaſonable, as to demand a reaſon for our belief in our own exiſtence: in both caſes, our belief is neceſſary and unavoidable, the reſult of a law of nature, and what

we cannot in practice contradict, but to our ſhame and perdition.

If the deluſions of dreaming furniſh any reaſonable pretence for doubting the authenticity of our waking perceptions, they may, with equal reaſon, make me doubtful of my own identity: for I have often dreamed, that I was a perſon different from what I am; nay, that I was two or more diſtinct perſons at one and the ſame time.

Further: If DES CARTES thought an argument neceſſary to convince him, that his perception of the external world was not imaginary, but real, I would aſk, How he could know that his argument was real, and not imaginary? How could he know that he was awake, and not aſleep, when he wrote his Principles of Philoſophy, if his waking thoughts did not, previous to all reaſoning, carry along with them undeniable evidence of their reality? I am awake, is a propoſition which he muſt have taken for granted, even before he could ſatisfy himſelf of the truth of what he thought the firſt of all principles, *Cogito, ergo ſum.*— To all which we may add, that if there be any perſons in the world who never

never dream at all *, (and ſome ſuch I think I have known), and whoſe belief in the exiſtence of a material world is not a whit ſtronger than that of thoſe whoſe ſleep is always attended with dreaming; this will be an unqueſtionable proof from experience, that the deluſions of ſleep do not in the leaſt affect our full conviction of the authenticity of the perceptions we receive, and the faculties we exert, when awake.

The firſt part of DES CARTES' argument for the exiſtence of bodies, would prove the exiſtence of the viſionary ideas we perceive in dreams; for they, as well as bodies, preſent themſelves to us, independent on our will. But the principal part of his argument is founded in the veracity of God, which he had before infer-

* "I once knew a man," ſays Mr LOCKE, "who "was bred a ſcholar, and had no bad memory, who "told me, that he had never dreamed in his life, till he "had that fever he was then newly recovered of, which "was about the five or ſix and twentieth year of his age. "I ſuppoſe the world affords more ſuch inſtances."

Eſſay on Human Underſtanding, book 2. ch. 1.

A young gentleman of my acquaintance told me, a few days ago, that he never dreams at all, except when his health is diſordered.

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red from our conſciouſneſs of the idea of an infinitely perfect, independent, and neceſſarily-exiſtent being. Our ſenſes inform us of the exiſtence of body; they give us this information in conſequence of a law eſtabliſhed by the divine will: but God is no deceiver; therefore is their information true. I have formerly given my opinion of this argument, and ſhown, that it is a ſophiſm, as DES CARTES hath ſtated it. We muſt believe our faculties to be true, before we can be convinced, either by proof, or by intuitive evidence. If we refuſe to believe in the veracity of our faculties till it be aſcertained by reaſoning, we ſhall never believe in it at all *.

MALEBRANCHE ſays, that men are more certain of the exiſtence of God, than of the exiſtence of body †. He allows, that DES CARTES hath proved the exiſtence of body, by the ſtrongeſt arguments that reaſon alone could furniſh; nay, he ſeems to acknowledge thoſe arguments to be in

* See the preceding ſection.

† Recherche de la verité, tom. 3. p. 30. A Paris, chez Pralard, 1679.

every

every reſpect unexceptionable*: yet he does not admit, that the exiſtence of matter is perfectly demonſtrated by this reaſoning. In philoſophical matters, ſays he, we ought to maintain our liberty as long as we can, and to believe nothing whatſoever, but when evidence compels us to believe. To be fully convinced of the exiſtence of bodies, it is neceſſary that we have it demonſtrated to us, not only that there is a God, and that God is no deceiver, but alſo that God hath aſſured us, that he hath actually created ſuch bo-

* Mais quoique M. Des Cartes ait donné les preuves le plus fortes que la raiſon toute ſeule puiſſe fournir pour l'exiſtence des corps; quoiqu' il ſoit evident, que Dieu n'eſt point trompeur, et qu' on puiſſe dire qu'il nous tromperoit effectivement, ſi nous nous trompions nous-mêmes en faiſant l'uſage que nous devons faire de nôtre eſprit, et des autres facultez dont il eſt l'auteur; cependant on peut dire que l'exiſtence de la matiere n'eſt point encore parfaitement demontrée. Car, enfin, en matiere de philoſophie, nous ne devons croire quoique ce ſoit, *que lorſque l'evidence nous y oblige*. Nous devons faire uſage de nôtre liberté autant que nous le pouvons.— Pour être pleinement convaincus qu'il y a des corps, il faut qu' on nous demontre, non ſeulement qu'il y a un Dieu, et que Dieu n' eſt point trompeur, mais encore que Dieu nous a aſſuré qu'il en a effectivement crée: ce que je ne trouve point prouvé dans les ouvrages de M. Des Cartes.

Tom. 3. p. 37. 38. 39.

dies;

dies: and this, ſays he, I do not find proved in the works of M. DES CARTES.

There are, according to MALEBRANCHE, but two ways in which God ſpeaks to the mind, and compels (or obliges) it to believe; to wit, by evidence, and by the faith. "The faith obliges us to believe "that bodies exiſt; but as to the evidence "of this truth, it certainly is not com- "plete; and it is alſo certain, that we are "not invincibly determined to believe, "that any thing exiſts, but God, and our "own mind. It is true, that we have an "extreme propenſity to believe that we "are ſurrounded with corporeal beings; "ſo far I agree with M. DES CARTES: "but this propenſity, natural as it is, doth "not force our belief by evidence; it only "inclines us to believe by impreſſion. "Now we ought not to be determined, in "our free judgements, by any thing but "light and evidence; if we ſuffer our- "ſelves to be guided by the ſenſible im- "preſſion, we ſhall be almoſt always miſ- "taken *."—Our author then propoſes, in

* Dieu ne parle à l'eſprit, et ne l'oblige à croire qu'en deux manieres; par l'evidence, et par la foi. Je

in brief, the ſubſtance of that argument againſt the exiſtence of body, which BERKELEY afterwards took ſuch pains to illuſtrate; and diſcovers, upon the whole, that, as a point of philoſophy, the exiſtence of matter is but a probability, to which we have it in our power either to aſſent, or not to aſſent, as we pleaſe. In a word, it is by the faith, and not by evidence, that we become certain of this truth.

This is not a proper place for analyſing the paſſage above quoted, otherwiſe it would be eaſy to ſhow, that the doctrine (ſuch as it is) which the author here delivers, is not perfectly reconcileable with other parts of his ſyſtem. But I only mean

Je demeure d'accord, que *la foi oblige à croire* qu'il y a des corps: mais pour l'evidence, il eſt certain, qu'elle n'eſt point entiére, et que nous ne ſommes point invinciblement portez à croire qu'il y ait quelqu' autre choſe que Dieu et nôtre eſprit. Il eſt vray, que nous avons un penchant extréme à croire qu'il y a des corps qui nous environnent. Je l'accorde à M. DES CARTES: mais ce penchant, tout naturel qu'il eſt, *ne nous y force* point par evidence; il nous y incline ſeulement par impreſſion. Or nous ne devons ſuivre dans nos jugemens libres que la lumiere et l'evidence; et ſi nous nous laiſſons conduire à l'impreſſion ſenſible, nous nous tromperons preſque toujours. *Tom. 3. p. 39.*

to obſerve, that what is here aſſerted, of our belief in the exiſtence of body being not neceſſary, but ſuch as we may withhold if we pleaſe, is contrary to my experience. That my body, and this pen and paper, and the other corporeal objects around me, do really exiſt, is to me as evident, as that my ſoul exiſts; it is indeed ſo evident, that nothing is or can be more ſo; and though my life depended upon the conſequence, I could not, by any effort, bring myſelf to entertain a doubt of it, even for a ſingle moment.

I muſt therefore affirm, that the exiſtence of matter can no more be diſproved by argument, than the exiſtence of myſelf, or than the truth of a ſelf-evident axiom in geometry. To argue againſt it, is to ſet reaſon in oppoſition to common ſenſe; which is indirectly to ſubvert the foundation of all juſt reaſoning, and to call in queſtion the diſtinction between truth and falſehood. I am told, however, that a great philoſopher hath actually demonſtrated, that matter does not exiſt. Demonſtrated! truly this is a piece of ſtrange information. At this rate, any falſehood may be proved to be true, and any truth

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to be falſe. For it is abſolutely impoſſible, that any truth ſhould be more evident to me than this, that matter does exiſt. Let us ſee, however, what BERKELEY has to ſay in behalf of this extraordinary doctrine. It is natural for demonſtration, and for all ſound reaſoning, to produce conviction, or at leaſt ſome degree of aſſent, in the perſon who attends to it, and underſtands it. I read *The Principles of Human Knowledge*, together with *The Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*. The arguments, I acknowledge, are ſubtle, and well adapted to the purpoſe of puzzling and confounding. Perhaps I will not undertake to confute them. Perhaps I am buſy, or indolent, or unacquainted with the principles of this philoſophy, or little verſed in your metaphyſical logic. But am I convinced, from this pretended demonſtration, that matter hath no exiſtence but as an idea in the mind? Not in the leaſt; my belief now is preciſely the ſame as before. — Is it unphiloſophical, not to be convinced by arguments which I cannot confute? Perhaps it may, but I cannot help it: you may, if you pleaſe, ſtrike me off the liſt of philoſophers, as a non-

conformiſt; you may call me unpliant, unreaſonable, unfaſhionable, and a man with whom it is not worth while to argue; but till the frame of my nature be unhinged, and a new ſet of faculties given me, I cannot believe this ſtrange doctrine, becauſe it is perfectly incredible. But if I were permitted to propoſe one clowniſh queſtion, I would fain aſk, Where is the harm of my continuing in my old opinion, and believing, with the reſt of the world, that I am not the only created being in the univerſe, but that there are a great many others, whoſe exiſtence is as independent on me as mine is on them? Where is the harm of my believing, that if I were to fall down yonder precipice, and break my neck, I ſhould be no more a man of this world? My neck, Sir, may be an idea to you, but to me it is a reality, and a very important one too. Where is the harm of my believing, that if in this ſevere weather, I were to neglect to throw (what you call) the idea of a coat over the ideas of my ſhoulders, the idea of cold would produce the idea of ſuch pain and diſorder as might poſſibly terminate in my real death? What great offence ſhall I commit

commit againſt God or man, church or ſtate, philoſophy or common ſenſe, if I continue to believe, that material food will nouriſh me, though the idea of it will not; that the real ſun will warm and enlighten me, though the livelieſt idea of him will do neither; and that, if I would obtain true peace of mind and ſelf-approbation, I muſt not only form ideas of compaſſion, juſtice, and generoſity, but alſo really exert thoſe virtues in external performance? What harm is there in all this?—O! no harm at all, Sir,—but the truth, the truth,—will you ſhut your eyes againſt the truth?—No honeſt man ever will: convince me that your doctrine is true, and I will inſtantly embrace it.—Have I not convinced thee, thou obſtinate, unaccountable, inexorable ——?—Anſwer my arguments, if thou canſt.—Alas, Sir, you have given me arguments in abundance, but you have not given me conviction; and if your arguments produce no conviction, they are worth nothing to me. They are like counterfeit bank-bills; ſome of which are ſo dextrouſly forged, that neither your eye nor mine can detect them; but yet a thouſand

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of them would go for nothing at the bank; and even the paper-maker would allow me more handſomely for a parcel of old rags. You need not give yourſelf the trouble to tell me, that I ought to be convinced; I ought to be convinced only when I feel conviction; when I feel no conviction, I ought not to be convinced. It has been obſerved of ſome doctrines and reaſonings, that their extreme abſurdity prevents their admitting a rational confutation. What! am I to believe ſuch doctrine? am I to be convinced by ſuch reaſoning? Now, I never heard of any doctrine more ſcandalouſly abſurd, than this of the non-exiſtence of matter. There is not a fiction in the Perſian tales that I could not as eaſily believe; the ſilliеſt conceit of the moſt contemptible ſuperſtition that ever diſgraced human nature, is not more ſhocking to common ſenſe, is not more repugnant to every principle of human belief. And muſt I admit this jargon for truth, becauſe I cannot confute the arguments of a man who is a more ſubtle diſputant than I? Does philoſophy require this of me? Then it muſt ſuppoſe, that truth is as variable as the fancies,

cies, the characters, and the intellectual abilities of men, and that there is no ſuch thing in nature as common ſenſe.

But all this, I ſhall perhaps be told, is but childiſh cavil, and unphiloſophical declamation. What if, after all, this very doctrine be believed, and the ſophiſtry (as you call it) of BERKELEY be admitted as ſound reaſoning, and legitimate proof? What then becomes of your common ſenſe, and your inſtinctive convictions?—What then, do you aſk? Then indeed I muſt acknowledge the fact to be very extraordinary; and I cannot help being in ſome pain about the conſequences, which muſt be important and fatal. If a man, out of vanity, or from a deſire of being in the faſhion, or in order to paſs for wonderfully wiſe, ſhall ſay, that BERKELEY's doctrine is true, while at the ſame time his belief is preciſely the ſame with mine, it is well; I leave him to enjoy the fruits of his hypocriſy, which will no doubt contribute mightily to his improvement in candour, happineſs, and wiſdom. If a man profeſſing this doctrine act like other men in the common affairs of life, I will not believe his profeſſion to be ſincere.

cere. For this doctrine, by removing body out of the univerſe, makes a total change in the circumſtances of men; and therefore, if it is not merely verbal, muſt produce a total change in their conduct. When a man is only turned out of his houſe, or ſtripped of his cloaths, or robbed of his money, he muſt change his behaviour, and act differently from other men, who enjoy thoſe advantages. Perſuade a man that he is a beggar and a vagabond, and you ſhall inſtantly ſee him change his manners. If your arguments againſt the exiſtence of matter have ever carried conviction along with them, they muſt at the ſame time have produced a much more extraordinary change of conduct; if they have produced no change of conduct, I inſiſt on it, they have never carried conviction along with them, whatever vehemence of proteſtation a man may uſe in avowing ſuch conviction. If you ſay, that though a man's underſtanding be convinced, there are certain inſtincts in his nature which will not permit him to alter his conduct; or, if he did, the reſt of the world would account him a madman; by the firſt apology, you acknowledge

knowledge the belief of the non-exiſtence of matter to be inconſiſtent with the laws of nature; by the ſecond, to be inconſiſtent with common ſenſe.

But if a man be convinced, that matter hath no exiſtence, and believe this ſtrange tenet as ſteadily, and with as little diſtruſt, as I believe the contrary; he will, I am afraid, have but little reaſon to applaud himſelf on this new acquiſition in ſcience; he will ſoon find, it had been better for him to have reaſoned, and believed, and acted, like the reſt of the world. If he fall down a precipice, or be trampled under foot by horſes, it will avail him little, that he once had the honour to be a diſciple of BERKELEY, and to believe that thoſe dangerous objects are nothing but ideas in the mind. And yet, if ſuch a man be ſeen to avoid a precipice, or to get out of the way of a coach and ſix horſes at full ſpeed, he acts as inconſiſtently with his belief, as if he ran away from the picture of an angry man, even while he believed it to be a picture. Suppoſing his life preſerved by the care of friends, or by the ſtrength of natural inſtinct urging him to act contrary to his

belief; yet will this belief coſt him dear. For if the plaineſt evidence, and fulleſt conviction, be certainly fallacious, I beg to be informed, what kind of evidence, and what degree of conviction, may reaſonably be depended on. If Nature be a juggler by trade, is it for us, poor purblind reptiles, to attempt to penetrate the myſteries of her art, and take upon us to decide, when it is ſhe preſents a true, and when a falſe appearance! I will not ſay, however, that this man runs a greater riſk of univerſal ſcepticiſm, than of univerſal credulity. Either the one or the other, or both, muſt be his portion; and either the one or the other would be ſufficient to imbitter my whole life, and to diſqualify me for every duty of a rational creature. He who can believe againſt common ſenſe, againſt the cleareſt evidence, againſt the fulleſt conviction, in any one caſe, may do the ſame in any other; conſequently he may become the dupe of every wrangler who is more acute than he; and then, if he is not entirely ſecluded from mankind, his liberty, virtue, and happineſs, are gone for ever. Indeed a chearful temper, ſtrong habits of virtue,

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and the company of the wiſe and good, may ſtill ſave him from perdition, if he have no temptations nor difficulties to encounter. But it is the end of every uſeful art to teach us to ſurmount difficulties, not to diſqualify us for attempting them. Men have been known to live many years in a warm chamber, after they were become too delicate to bear the open air: but who will ſay, that ſuch a habit of body is deſirable? what phyſician will recommend to the healthy ſuch a regimen as would produce it?

But that I may no longer ſuppoſe, what I maintain to be impoſſible, that mankind in general, or even one rational being, could, by force of argument, be convinced that this abſurd doctrine is true;—what if all men were in one inſtant deprived of their underſtanding by almighty power, and made to believe, that matter hath no exiſtence but as an idea in the mind, all other earthly things remaining as they are? Doubtleſs this cataſtrophe would, according to our metaphyſicians, throw a wonderful light on all the parts of knowledge. I pretend not even to gueſs at the number, extent, or quality, of aſto-

niſhing diſcoveries that would then ſtart forth into view. But of this I am certain, that in leſs than a month after, there could not, without another miracle, be one human creature alive on the face of the earth.

BERKELEY foreſaw, and has done what he could to obviate, ſome of theſe objections. There are two points which he has taken great pains to prove. The firſt is, That his ſyſtem differs not from the belief of the reſt of mankind; the ſecond, That our conduct cannot be in the leaſt affected by our diſbelief of the exiſtence of a material world.

1. As to the firſt, it is certainly falſe. Mr HUME himſelf ſeems willing to give it up. I have known many who could not anſwer BERKELEY's arguments; I never knew one who believed his doctrine. I have mentioned it to ſome who were unacquainted with philoſophy, and therefore could not be ſuppoſed to have any bias in favour of either ſyſtem; they all treated it as moſt contemptible jargon, and what no man in his ſenſes ever did or could believe. I have carefully attended to the effects produced by it upon my own mind; it appears

pears to me at this moment, as when I firſt heard it, incredible and incomprehenſible. I ſay incomprehenſible: for though, by reading it over and over, I have got a ſet of phraſes and arguments by heart, which would enable me, if I were ſo diſpoſed, to talk, and argue, and write, "about it and "about it;" yet, when I lay ſyſtems and ſyllogiſms aſide, when I enter on any part of the buſineſs of life, or when I refer the matter to the unbiaſſed deciſion of my own mind, I plainly ſee, that I had no diſtinct meaning to my words when I ſaid, that the material world hath no exiſtence but in the mind that perceives it. In a word, if this author had aſſerted, that I and all mankind acknowledge and believe the *Arabian Nights Entertainment* to be a true hiſtory, I could not have had any better reaſon for contradicting that aſſertion, than I have for contradicting this, "That BERKELEY's principles, in re-"gard to the exiſtence of matter, differ "not from the belief of the reſt of man-"kind."

2. In behalf of the ſecond point, he argues, "That nothing gives us an intereſt "in the material world, except the feel-"ings

" ings pleaſant or painful which accom-
" pany our perceptions; that theſe percep-
" tions are the ſame, whether we believe
" the material world to exiſt or not to ex-
" iſt; conſequently that our pleaſant or
" painful feelings are alſo the ſame; and
" therefore that our conduct, which de-
" pends on our feelings and perceptions,
" muſt be the ſame, whether we believe
" or diſbelieve the exiſtence of matter."

But if it be certain, that by the law of our nature we are unavoidably determined to believe that matter exiſts, and to act upon this belief, (and nothing, I think, can be more certain), how can it be imagined, that a contrary belief would produce no alteration in our conduct and ſentiments? Surely the laws of nature are not ſuch trifles, as that it ſhould be a matter of perfect indifference, whether we act and think agreeably to them or not? I believe that matter exiſts; — I muſt believe that matter exiſts; — I muſt continually act upon this belief; ſuch is the law of my conſtitution. Suppoſe my conſtitution changed in this reſpect, all other things remaining as they are; — would there then be no change in my ſentiments and conduct?

duct? If there would not, then is this law of nature, in the firſt place, uſeleſs, becauſe men could do as well without it; ſecondly, inconvenient, becauſe its end is to keep us ignorant of the truth; and, thirdly, abſurd, becauſe inſufficient for anſwering its end, the Biſhop of Cloyne, and others, having, it ſeems, diſcovered the truth in ſpite of it. Is this according to the uſual economy of Nature? Does this language become her ſervants and interpreters? Is it poſſible to deviſe any ſentiments or maxims more ſubverſive of truth, and more repugnant to the ſpirit of true philoſophy?

Further: All external objects have ſome qualities in common; but between an external object and an idea, or thought of the mind, there is not, there cannot poſſibly be, any reſemblance. A grain of ſand, and the globe of the earth; a burning coal, and a lump of ice; a drop of ink, and a ſheet of white paper, reſemble each other, in being extended, ſolid, figured, coloured, and diviſible; but a thought or idea hath no extenſion, ſolidity, figure, colour, nor diviſibility: ſo that no two external objects can be ſo unlike, as an external object

object and (what philoſophers call) the idea of it. Now we are taught by BERKELEY, that external objects (that is, the things we take for external objects) are nothing but ideas in our minds; in other words, that they are in every reſpect different from what they appear to be. This candle, it ſeems, hath not one of thoſe qualities it appears to have: it is not white, nor luminous, nor round, nor diviſible, nor extended; for to an idea of the mind, not one of thoſe qualities can poſſibly belong. How then ſhall I know what it really is? From what it ſeems to be, I can conclude nothing; no more than a blind man, by handling a bit of black wax, can judge of the colour of ſnow, or the viſible appearance of the ſtarry heavens. The candle may be a lump of ice, an Egyptian pyramid, a mad dog, or nothing at all; it may be the iſland of Madagaſcar, Saturn's ring, or one of the Pleiades, for any thing I know, or can ever know to the contrary, except you allow me to judge of its nature from its appearance; which, however, I cannot reaſonably do, if its appearance and nature are in every reſpect ſo different and unlike as

not

not to have one ſingle quality in common. I muſt therefore believe it to be, what it appears to be, a real, corporeal, external object, and ſo reject BERKELEY's ſyſtem; or I never can, with any ſhadow of reaſon, believe any thing whatſoever concerning it. Will it yet be ſaid, that the belief of this ſyſtem cannot in the leaſt affect our ſentiments and conduct? With equal truth may it be ſaid, that Newton's conduct and ſentiments would not have been in the leaſt affected by his being metamorphoſed into an idiot, or a pillar of ſalt.

Some readers may perhaps be diſſatisfied with this reaſoning, on account of the ambiguity of the words *external object* and *idea*; which, however, the Immaterialiſts have not as yet fully explained. Others may think, that I muſt have miſunderſtood the author; for that he was too acute a logician to leave his ſyſtem expoſed to objections ſo deciſive, and ſo obvious. To gratify ſuch readers, I will not inſiſt on theſe objections. That I may have miſunderſtood the author's doctrine, is not only poſſible, but highly probable; nay, I have reaſon to think, that it was not perfectly underſtood

even by himſelf. For did not BERKELEY write his *Principles of Human Knowledge*, with this expreſs view, (which does him great honour), to baniſh ſcepticiſm both from ſcience and from religion? Was he not ſanguine in his expectations of ſucceſs? Hath not the event proved, that he was egregiouſly miſtaken? For is it not evident, from the uſe to which later authors have applied it, that his ſyſtem leads directly to atheiſm and univerſal ſcepticiſm? And if a machine diſappoint its inventor ſo far as to produce effects contrary to thoſe he wiſhed, intended, and expected; may we not, without breach of charity, conclude, that he did not perfectly underſtand his plan? At any rate, it appears from this fact, that our author did not foreſee all the objections to which his theory is liable. He did not foreſee, that it might be made the foundation of a ſceptical ſyſtem: if he had, we know he would have renounced it with abhorrence.

This one objection, therefore, (in which I think I cannot be miſtaken), will fully anſwer my preſent purpoſe: Our author's doctrine is contrary to common belief, and leads

leads to univerſal ſcepticiſm. Suppoſe it, then, univerſally and ſeriouſly adopted; ſuppoſe all men diveſted of all belief, and conſequently of all principle; would not the diſſolution of ſociety, and the deſtruction of mankind, neceſſarily enſue?

Still I ſhall be told, that BERKELEY was a good man, and that his principles did him no hurt. I allow it; he was indeed a moſt excellent perſon; none can revere his memory more than I. But does it appear, that he ever acted according to his principles, or that he thoroughly underſtood them? Does it appear, that, if he had put them in practice, no hurt would have enſued to himſelf*, or to ſociety? Does it appear, that he was a ſceptic, or a friend to ſcepticiſm? Does it

* Let it not be pretended, that a man may diſbelieve his ſenſes without danger of inconvenience. Pyrrho (as we read in Diogenes Laertius) profeſſed to diſbelieve his ſenſes, and to be in no apprehenſion from any of the objects that affected them. The appearance of a precipice or wild beaſt was nothing to Pyrrho; at leaſt he ſaid ſo: he would not avoid them; he knew they were nothing at all, or at leaſt that they were not what they ſeemed to be. Suppoſe him to have been in earneſt; and ſuppoſe his keepers to have in earneſt adopted the ſame principles; would not their limbs and lives have been in as great

it appear, that men may adopt his principles without danger of becoming ſceptics? The contrary of all this appears with uncontrovertible evidence.

Surely pride was not made for man. The moſt exalted genius may find in himſelf many affecting memorials of human frailty, and ſuch as often render him an object of compaſſion to thoſe who in virtue and underſtanding are far inferior. I pity BERKELEY's weakneſs in patroniſing an abſurd and dangerous theory; I doubt not but it hath overcaſt many of his days with a gloom, which neither the approbation of his conſcience, nor the natural ſerenity of his temper, could entirely diſſipate. And though I were to believe, that he was intoxicated with this theory, and rejoiced in it; yet ſtill I ſhould pity the intoxication as a weakneſs: for candour will not permit me to give it a harſher name; as I ſee in his other writings, and know by the teſtimony of his contempo-

danger, as the limbs and life of a blind and deaf man wandering by himſelf in a ſolitary place, with his hands tied behind his back? I would as ſoon ſay, that our ſenſes are uſeleſs faculties, as that we might diſbelieve them without danger of inconvenience.

raries,

raries, particularly Pope and Swift, that he was a friend to virtue, and to human nature.

We muſt not ſuppoſe a falſe doctrine harmleſs, merely becauſe it hath not been able to corrupt the heart of a good man. Nor, becauſe a few ſceptics have not authority to render ſcience contemptible, nor power to overturn ſociety, muſt we ſuppoſe, that therefore ſcepticiſm is not dangerous to ſcience or mankind. The effects of a general ſcepticiſm would be dreadful and fatal. We muſt therefore, notwithſtanding our reverence for the character of BERKELEY, be permitted to affirm, what we have ſufficiently proved, that his doctrine is ſubverſive of man's moſt important intereſts, as a moral, intelligent, and percipient being.

After all, though I were to grant, that the diſbelief of the exiſtence of matter could not produce any conſiderable change in our principles of action and reaſoning, the reader will find in the ſequel *, that the point I have chiefly in view would not be much affected even by that conceſſion.

* Part 2. chap. 3.

I ſay not this, as being diffident or ſceptical in regard to what I have advanced on the preſent ſubject. Doctrines which I do not believe, I will never recommend to others. I am abſolutely certain, that to me the belief of BERKELEY's ſyſtem would be attended with the moſt fatal conſequences; and that it would be equally dangerous to the reſt of mankind, I cannot doubt, ſo long as I believe their nature and mine to be the ſame.

Though it be abſurd to attempt a proof of what is ſelf-evident, it is manly and meritorious to confute the objections that ſophiſtry may urge againſt it. This, with reſpect to the ſubject in queſtion, hath been done, in a deciſive and maſterly manner, by the learned and ſagacious Dr Reid *; who proves, that the reaſonings of BERKELEY, and others, concerning primary and ſecondary qualities, owe all their ſtrength to the ambiguity of words. I have proved, that, though this fundamental error had never been detected, the philoſophy of BERKELEY is in its own nature ab-

* Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Senſe.

ſurd,

ſurd, becauſe it ſuppoſeth the original principles of common ſenſe controvertible and fallacious: a ſuppoſition repugnant to the genius of true philoſophy; and which leads to univerſal credulity, or univerſal ſcepticiſm; and conſequently to the ſubverſion of knowledge and virtue, and the extermination of the human ſpecies.

It is proper, before we proceed to the next inſtance, to make a remark or two on what hath been ſaid.

1. Here we have an inſtance of a doctrine advanced by ſome philoſophers, in direct contradiction to the general belief of all men in all ages.

2. The reaſoning by which it is ſupported, though long accounted unanſwerable, did never produce a ſerious and ſteady conviction. Common ſenſe ſtill declared the doctrine to be falſe: we were ſorry to find the powers of human reaſon ſo limited, as not to afford a logical confutation of it; we were convinced it merited confutation, and flattered ourſelves, that one time or other it would be confuted.

3. The real and general belief of this doctrine would be attended with fatal conſequences

ſequences to ſcience, and to human nature: for this is a doctrine according to which a man could not act nor reaſon in the common affairs of life, without incurring the charge of inſanity or folly, and involving himſelf in diſtreſs and perdition.

4. An ingenious man, from a ſenſe of the bad tendency of this doctrine, applies himſelf to examine the principles on which it is founded; diſcovers them to be erroneous; and proves, to the full conviction of all competent judges, that from beginning to end it is all a myſtery of falſehood, ariſing from the uſe of ambiguous expreſſions, and from the gratuitous admiſſion of principles which never could have been admitted if they had been thoroughly underſtood.

SECT. III.

Of Liberty and Neceſſity.

THE ſecond inſtance to which I propoſe to apply the principles of this diſcourſe, by ſhowing the danger of carrying

rying any inveſtigation beyond the dictates of common ſenſe, is no other than the celebrated queſtion concerning liberty and neceſſity: a queſtion on which many things have been ſaid, and ſome things, I preſume, to little purpoſe. To enter into all the particulars of this controverſy, would be foreign to my preſent deſign; and I would not wiſh to add to a diſpute already too bulky. My intention is, to treat the doctrine of neceſſity as I treated that of the non-exiſtence of matter; by inquiring, whether the one be not, as well as the other, contrary to common ſenſe, and therefore abſurd.

1. That certain intentions and actions are in themſelves, and previous to all conſideration of their conſequences, good, laudable, and meritorious; and that other actions and intentions are bad, blameable, and worthy of puniſhment,—hath been felt and acknowledged by all reaſonable creatures in all ages and nations. We need not wonder at the univerſality of this ſentiment: it is as natural to the human conſtitution, as the faculties of hearing, ſeeing, and memory; it is as clear, unequi-

vocal, and affecting, as any intimation from any ſenſe external or internal.

2. That we cannot do ſome things, but have it in our power to do others, is what no man in his ſenſes will heſitate to affirm. I can take up my ſtaff from the ground, but I cannot lift a ſtone of a thouſand weight. On a large common, I may walk ſouthward or northward, eaſtward or weſtward; but I cannot aſcend to the clouds, nor ſink downward to the centre of the earth. Juſt now I have power to think of an abſent friend, of the peak of Teneriffe, of a paſſage in Homer, or of the death of Charles I. When a man aſks me a queſtion, I have it in my power to anſwer or be ſilent, to anſwer ſoftly or roughly, in terms of reſpect or in terms of contempt. Frequent temptations to vice fall in my way; I may yield or I may reſiſt: if I reſiſt, I applaud myſelf, becauſe I am conſcious it was in my power to do otherwiſe; if I yield, I am filled with ſhame and remorſe, for having neglected to do what I might have done, and ought to have done. My liberty in theſe inſtances I cannot prove by argument; but there is not a truth

truth in geometry of which I am more certain.

Is not this doctrine ſufficiently obvious? Muſt I quote Epictetus, or any other ancient author, to prove that men were of the ſame opinion in former times? No idea occurs more frequently in my reading and converſation, than that of power or agency; and I think I underſtand my own meaning as well when I ſpeak of it, as when I ſpeak of any thing elſe. But this idea has had the misfortune to come under the examination of Mr HUME, who, according to cuſtom, has found means ſo to darken and disfigure it, that, till we have cleared it of his miſrepreſentations, we cannot proceed any further in the preſent ſubject. And we are the more inclined to digreſs on this occaſion, that he has made his theory of power the ground of ſome atheiſtical inferences, which we would not ſcruple at any time to ſtep out of our way to overturn. Perhaps theſe frequent digreſſions are offenſive to the reader: they are equally ſo to the writer. To remove rubbiſh is neither an elegant nor a pleaſant work, though often neceſſary. It is peculiarly neceſſary

in the philoſophy of human nature. The road to moral truth has been left in ſuch a plight by ſome modern projectors, that a man of honeſty and plain ſenſe muſt either, with great labour, and loſs of time, delve his way through, or be ſwallowed up in a quagmire. The metaphyſician advances more expeditiouſly. His levity, perhaps, enables him, like Camilla in Virgil, to ſkim along the ſurface without ſinking; or, perhaps, the extreme ſubtlety of his genius can, like Satan in Paradiſe Loſt, penetrate this chaos, without being much incumbered or retarded in his progreſs. But men of ordinary talents have not thoſe advantages, and muſt therefore be allowed to flounce along, though with no very graceful motion, the beſt way they can.

All ideas, according to Mr HUME's fundamental hypotheſis, are copied from and repreſent impreſſions: But we have never any impreſſion that contains any power or efficacy: We never, therefore, have any idea of power *. In proof of the minor propoſition of this ſyllogiſm, he

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 282.

remarks,

remarks, That "when we think we per-
"ceive our mind acting on matter, or
"one piece of matter acting upon ano-
"ther, we do in fact perceive only two
"objects or events contiguous and ſucceſ-
"ſive, the ſecond of which is always found
"in experience to follow the firſt; but
"that we never perceive, either by exter-
"nal ſenſe, or by conſciouſneſs, that
"power, energy, or efficacy, which con-
"nects the one event with the other. By
"obſerving that the two events do always
"accompany each other, the imagination
"acquires a habit of going readily from
"the firſt to the ſecond, and from the ſe-
"cond to the firſt; and hence we are led
"to conceive a kind of neceſſary connec-
"tion between them. But in fact there
"is neither neceſſity nor power in the ob-
"jects we conſider, but only in the mind
"that conſiders them; and even in the
"mind, this power or neceſſity is nothing
"but a determination of the fancy, acqui-
"red by habit, to paſs from the idea of
"an object to that of its uſual attend-
"ant *."—So that what we call the effi-

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 272.—300.

cacy

cacy of a cauſe to produce an effect, is neither in the cauſe nor in the effect, but only in the imagination, which hath contracted a habit of paſſing from the object called the cauſe, to the object called the effect, and thus aſſociating them together. Has the fire a power to melt lead? No; but the fancy is determined by habit to paſs from the idea of fire to that of melted lead, on account of our having always perceived them contiguous and ſucceſſive; —and this is the whole matter. Have I a power to move my arm? No; the volition which precedes the motion of my arm has no connection with that motion; but the motion having been always obſerved to follow the volition, comes to be aſſociated with it in the fancy; and what we call the power, or neceſſary connection, has nothing to do, either with the volition or with the motion, but is merely a determination of my fancy, or your fancy, or any body's fancy, to aſſociate the idea or impreſſion of my volition with the impreſſion or idea of the motion of my arm.—I am ſorry I cannot expreſs myſelf more clearly; but I ſhould not do juſtice to my author, if I did not imitate his obſcurity

on

on the preſent occaſion: plain words will never do, when one has an unintelligible doctrine to ſupport.

What ſhall we ſay to this collection of ſtrange phraſes? or what name ſhall we give it? Shall we call it a moſt ingenious diſcovery, illuſtrated by a moſt ingenious argument? This would be complimenting the author at a very great expence; for this would imply, not only that Mr HUME is the wiſeſt of mortal men, but alſo that he is the only individual of that ſpecies of animals who is not a fool. Certain it is, that all men have in all ages talked, and argued, and acted, from a perſuaſion that they had a very diſtinct notion of power. If our author can prove, that they had no ſuch notion, he can alſo prove, that all human diſcourſe is nonſenſe, all human actions abſurdity, and all human compoſitions (his own not excepted) words without meaning. The boldneſs of this theory will, however, paſs with many, for a proof of its being ingenious. Be it ſo, Gentlemen; I diſpute not about epithets: if you will have it, that genius conſiſteth in the art of putting words together ſo as to form abſurd propoſitions,

I have nothing more to ſay. Others will admire this doctrine, becauſe the words by which the author means to illuſtrate and prove it, if printed on a good paper and with an elegant type, would of themſelves make a pretty ſizable volume. It were pity to deprive theſe people of the pleaſure of admiring; otherwiſe I might tell them, that nothing is more eaſy than this method of compoſition; for that I would undertake, at a very ſhort warning, (if it could be done innocently, and without prejudice to my health), to write as many pages, with equal appearance of reaſon and argument, and with equal advantage to philoſophy and mankind, in vindication of any given abſurdity; provided only it be expreſſed in words of which one at leaſt is ambiguous.

In truth, I am ſo little diſpoſed to admire this extraordinary paradox, that nothing could make me believe its author to have been in earneſt, if I had not found him drawing inferences from it too ſerious to be jeſted with by any perſon who is not abſolutely diſtracted. It is one of Mr HUME's maxims, That we can never have reaſon to believe, that any object, or

quality

quality of an object, exiſts, of which we cannot form an idea *. But, according to this aſtoniſhing theory of power and cauſation, we have *no idea* of power, nor of any being endowed with any power, MUCH LESS of one endowed with infinite power †. The inference is —— what I do not chuſe to commit to paper. But our elegant author is not ſo ſuperſtitious. He often puts his readers in mind, that this inference, or ſomething very like it, is deducible from his doctrine ‡:—for which, no doubt, every friend to truth, virtue, and human nature, is infinitely obliged to him!

But what do you ſay in oppoſition to my theory? You affect to treat it with a contempt which hardly becomes you, and which my philoſophy has not met with from your betters: pray let us hear your arguments. —And do you, Sir, really think it incumbent on me to prove by argument, that I, and all other men, have

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 302.

† Some readers will ſmile, perhaps, at the phraſeology of this ſentence; but I quote the author's own words. See Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 432.

‡ Ibid. p. 284. 291. 306. 431. &c.

a notion of power; and that the efficacy of a cauſe (of fire, for inſtance, to melt lead) is in the fire, and not in my mind? Would you think it incumbent on me to confute you with arguments, if you were pleaſed to affirm, that all men have tails and cloven feet; and that it was I who produced the earthquake that deſtroyed Liſbon, the plague that depopulates Conſtantinople, the heat that ſcorches the wilds of Africa, and the cold that freezes the Hyperborean ocean? Truly, Sir, I have not the face to undertake a direct confutation of what I do not underſtand; and I am ſo far from comprehending this part of your ſyſtem, that I will venture to pronounce it perfectly unintelligible. I know there are ſome who ſay they underſtand it; but I alſo know, that there are ſome who ſpeak, and read, and write too, with very little expence of thought.

Theſe are all but evaſions, you exclaim; and inſiſt on my coming to the point. Never fear, Sir; I am too deeply intereſted in ſome of the conſequences of this theory of yours, to put you off with evaſions. To come therefore to the point, I ſhall firſt ſtate your doctrine in your own words, that

that there may be no riſk of miſrepreſentation; and then, if I ſhould not be able directly to prove it falſe, (for the reaſon already given), I ſhall demonſtrate, indirectly at leaſt, or by the apagogical method, that it is not, and cannot poſſibly be true. "As the neceſſity," ſays Mr HUME, "which makes two times two e-"qual to four, or three angles of a triangle "equal to two right ones, lies only in the "act of the underſtanding by which we "conſider and compare theſe ideas *; in "like manner, the neceſſity or power which "unites cauſes and effects, lies in the "determination of the mind to paſs from "the one to the other. The efficacy, or "energy, of cauſes, is neither placed in "the cauſes themſelves, nor in the Deity, "nor in the concurrence of theſe two prin-"ciples; but belongs entirely to the ſoul, "which conſiders the union of two or "more objects in all paſt inſtances. It is

* What! is it my underſtanding that makes two and two equal to four! Was it not ſo before I was born, and would it not be ſo though all intelligence were to ceaſe throughout the univerſe!— But it is idle to ſpend time in confuting what every child who has learned the very firſt elements of ſcience, knows to be abſurd.

" here that the real power of cauſes is " placed, along with their connection and " neceſſity *."

To find that his principles lead to atheiſm, would ſtagger an ordinary philoſopher, and make him ſuſpect his fundamental hypotheſis, and all his ſubſequent reaſonings. But the author juſt now quoted is not ſtaggered by conſiderations of this kind. On the contrary, he is ſo intoxicated with his diſcovery, that, however ſceptical in other points, he ſeems willing to admit this as one certain concluſion †.

If

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 291.

† Speaking of it in another place he ſays, " A concluſion which is ſomewhat extraordinary, but which " ſeems founded on ſufficient evidence. Nor will its evidence be weakened by any general diffidence of the underſtanding, or ſceptical ſuſpicion, concerning every " concluſion which is new and extraordinary. No concluſions can be more agreeable to ſcepticiſm, than ſuch " as make diſcoveries concerning the weakneſs and narrow limits of human reaſon and capacity."

Hume's Eſſays, vol. 2. p. 87. edit. 1767.

I know not what diſcoveries this concluſion may lead others to make concerning our author's reaſon and capacity; but I have ground to think, that the diſcoveries made by himſelf on the occaſion, have not improved his modeſty

If a man can reconcile himſelf to atheiſm, which is the greateſt of all abſurdities, I fear I ſhall hardly put him out of conceit with his doctrine, when I ſhow him, that other leſs enormous abſurdities are implied in it. We may make the trial however. Gentlemen are ſometimes pleaſed to entertain unaccountable prejudices againſt their Maker; who yet, in other matters, where neither faſhion nor hypotheſis interfere, condeſcend to acknowledge, that the old diſtinction between truth and falſehood is not altogether without foundation.

On the ſuppoſition, that we have no idea of power or energy, and that the preceding theory of cauſation is juſt, our author gives the following definition of a cauſe; which ſeems to be fairly enough deduced from his theory, and which he ſays is the beſt that he can give. "A cauſe is "an object precedent and contiguous to

modeſty to any extraordinary pitch; otherwiſe he would not have aſſerted, with ſo much confidence, what he acknowledges to be a *moſt violent paradox*, and what is indeed contrary to the experience and conviction of every perſon of common ſenſe. See *Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol.* 1. *p.* 291. 299.

"another,

"another, and ſo united with it, that the "idea of the one determines the mind to "form the idea of the other, and the im-"preſſion of the one to form a more live-"ly idea of the other *." There are now in my view two contiguous houſes, one of which was built laſt ſummer, and the other two years ago. By ſeeing them conſtantly together for many months, I find, that the idea of the one determines my mind to form the idea of the other, and the impreſſion of the one to form a more lively idea of the other. So that, according to our author's definition, the one houſe is the cauſe, and the other the effect! — Again, day and night have always been contiguous and ſucceſſive; the imagination naturally runs from the idea or impreſſion of the one to the idea of the other: conſequently, according to the ſame profound theory and definition, either day is the cauſe of night, or night the cauſe of day, juſt as we conſider the one or the other to have been originally prior in time; that is, in other words, light is either the cauſe or the effect of

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 298.

darkneſs;

darkneſs; and its being the one or the other, depends entirely on my imagination! Let thoſe admire this diſcovery who underſtand it.

Cauſation implies more than priority and contiguity of the cauſe to the effect. This relation cannot be conceived at all, without a ſuppoſition of power or energy in the cauſe *. Let the reader recollect two things that ſtand related as cauſe and effect; let him contemplate them with a view to this relation; then let him conceive the cauſe diveſted of all power, and he muſt at the ſame inſtant conceive, that it is a cauſe no longer: for a cauſe diveſted of power, is diveſted of that by which it is a cauſe. If a man, after examining his notion of cauſation in this manner, is conſcious that he hath an idea of power, then I ſay he hath that idea. If all men, in all ages, have uſed the word *power*, or ſomething ſynonymous to it, and if all men know what they mean when they ſpeak of power, I maintain, that all men

* Non ſic cauſa intelligi debet, ut quod cuique antecedat id ei cauſa ſit, ſed quod cuique *efficienter* antecedat. *Cicero, De Fato, cap.* 15.

have

have a notion, conception, or idea of power, in whatever way they came by it: and I alſo maintain, that no true philoſopher ever denied the exiſtence or reality of any thing, merely becauſe he could not give an account of its origin, or becauſe the opinion commonly received concerning its origin did not happen to quadrate with his ſyſtem.

When Mr HUME ſays, that the efficacy or energy of cauſes is not placed in the cauſes themſelves, he ſays neither leſs nor more than this, that what is eſſential to a cauſe is not in a cauſe; or, in other words, —that a cauſe is not a cauſe.—Are there any perſons who, upon the authority of this theoriſt, have raſhly adopted atheiſtical principles? I know there are ſuch. Ye blinded followers of a blind guide, ye dupes of unmeaning words and incomprehenſible arguments, behold on what a champion ye have placed your confidence! All the comfort I can give you is, that if it be poſſible for the ſame thing at the ſame time to be and not to be, you may poſſibly be in the right.

It follows from what hath been ſaid, that we cannot admit this theory of power and

and cauſation, without admitting, at the ſame time, the groſſeſt and moſt impious abſurdities. Is this a ſufficient confutation of it? I think it is. If any perſon think otherwiſe, I take a ſhorter method, and utterly deny all the premiſes from which this ſtrange concluſion is ſuppoſed to reſult. I deny the doctrine of impreſſions and ideas, as the author has explained it; nay, I have already affirmed, and proved, it to be not only falſe, but incomprehenſible. And I maintain, that though it could be ſhown, that all ſimple ideas are derived from impreſſions or intimations of ſenſe, it is true notwithſtanding, that all men have an idea of power. They get it by experience, that is, by intimations of ſenſe, both external and internal. Their mind acting upon their body gives them that notion or idea; their body acting on other bodies, and acted on by other bodies, gives them the ſame idea; which is alſo ſuggeſted by all the effects and changes they ſee produced in the univerſe. So thoroughly are we acquainted with it, that we can, in caſes innumerable, calculate, with mathematical preci-

ſion, the degree of power neceſſary to produce a given effect.

I repeat therefore, notwithſtanding all our author hath ſaid, or can ſay, to the contrary, that ſome things are in our power, and others are not; and that we perfectly underſtand our own meaning when we ſay ſo.—That the reader may not loſe any chain in our reaſoning, he will pleaſe to look back to the ſecond and third paragraphs of this ſection.

3. By attending to my own feelings, and to the evidence given by other men of theirs, I am ſenſible, that I deſerve reward or puniſhment for thoſe actions only which are in my own power. I am no more accountable for the evil which I can neither prevent nor remedy, than for the deſtruction of Troy, or the plagues of Egypt; and for the good which happens by my means, but againſt my will, I no more deſerve reward or praiſe, than if I were a piece of inanimate matter.

This is the doctrine of common ſenſe; and it hath in all ages been ſupported by ſome of the moſt powerful principles of our nature; by principles which, in the common affairs of life, no man dares ſuppoſe

poſe equivocal or fallacious. A man may as well tell me, that I am blind, or deaf, or that I feel no heat when I approach the fire, as that I have not a natural ſentiment diſpoſing me to blame intentional injury, and to praiſe intentional beneficence; and which makes me feel and be conſcious, that the evil I am compelled to do is not criminal, and the good I perform againſt my will is not meritorious. That other men are conſcious of the ſame ſentiment, I know with as much certainty as I can know any thing of what paſſes in the minds of other men; for I have daily and hourly opportunities of making obſervations in regard to this very point. The greateſt part of converſation turns upon the morality of human actions; and I never yet heard any perſon ſeriouſly blamed or applauded, by a reaſonable creature, for an action in the performance of which he was not conſidered as a free agent *.

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* Si omnia fato fiunt, omnia fiunt cauſa antecedente; et, ſi appetitus, illa etiam quæ appetitum ſequuntur: ergo, etiam aſſenſiones. At ſi cauſa appetitus non eſt ſita in nobis, ne ipſe quidem appetitus eſt in noſtra poteſtate. Quod ſi ita eſt, ne illa quidem quæ appetitu efficiuntur

The moſt rigid Predeſtinarians ſuppoſe freedom of will to be in one way or other conſiſtent with eternal and unconditional decrees: if they cannot explain in what way,—they call it a myſtery; it ſurpaſſes their underſtanding: but it muſt be ſo; for otherwiſe the morality of actions is altogether incomprehenſible *. Do the intereſts of ſcience, or of virtue, ſuffer by this repreſentation of the matter? I think not.

But

ſunt ſita in nobis. Non ſunt igitur, neque aſſenſiones neque actiones, in noſtra poteſtate: *ex quo efficitur, ut nec laudationes juſtæ ſint, nec vituperationes, nec honores, nec ſupplicia.* Quod cum vitioſum ſit, probabiliter concludi putant, non omnia fato fieri quæcumque fiant.

Cicero de Fato, cap. 17.

* The reader, I hope, does not think me ſuch a novice in reaſoning, as to urge the judgement of the council of Trent in behalf of any doctrine, philoſophical or religious. Yet every fact in logic and morals is worth our notice, if we would eſtabliſh thoſe ſciences on their only firm foundation, the univerſal conſent and practice of mankind. It deſerves, therefore, to be remarked, that at the Reformation this conſciouſneſs of free-will was acknowledged, both by the Lutherans, and by the church of Rome, to be a principle of common ſenſe, which was to be aſcertained, not by reaſoning, but by experimental proof. So ſays a moſt judicious and elegant hiſtorian, whoſe words are remarkably appoſite to the preſent ſubject, and to the manner in which we treat it. Speaking of ſome articles ſaid to

be

But ſome philoſophers, not ſatisfied with this view of it, are for bringing the ſentiment of moral liberty to the teſt of reaſon. They want to prove by argument, either that I have, or that I have not, ſuch a feeling: or, if I ſhall be found to have it, they want to know whether it be fallacious or not. In other words, they want to prove, or to diſprove, what I know by inſtinct to be unqueſtionably certain: or they want to inquire, whether it be reaſonable for me to act and think according to a principle, which, by the law of my nature, I cannot contradict, either in thought or action. Would not the ſame

be maintained by the Lutherans, in oppoſition to free-will, the hiſtorian informs us, that, in the judgement of many of that celebrated council, the opinion implied in thoſe articles, "E empia, e biasfema contra Dio. — Ch' era una pazzia *contra il ſenſo commune, eſperimentando ogni huomo la propria libertà, che non merita conteſtatione, ma, come Ariſtotele dice, o caſtigo, o prova eſperimentale.* Che i medeſimi diſcepoli di Luthero s' erano accorti della pazzia; e, moderando l' aſſordità, diſſero poi, eſſervi libertà nell' huomo in quello, che tocca le attioni eſterne politiche ed economiche, e quanto ad ogni giuſtitia civile; *le quali è ſciocco chi non conoſce venir dal conſeglio ed elettione*; reſtringendoſi a negar la libertà quanta alla ſola giuſtitia divina." *Iſtoria del Concil. Trid. di P. Sarpi. lib.* 2.

ſpirit

ſpirit of inquiry lead a geometrician to attempt a proof or confutation of his axioms; a natural philoſopher to doubt whether things be what his ſenſes repreſent them; an ordinary man to argue concerning the propriety of perceiving colours by the eyes, and odours by the noſtrils? Would not the ſame ſpirit of doubt and diſputation, applied to more familiar inſtances, transform a philoſopher into a madman, and a perſon of plain ſenſe into an idiot?

But let us not be too rigid. If a philoſopher muſt needs have his rattles and playthings, let him have them: only, for his own ſake, and for the ſake of the neighbours, I would adviſe, that edge-tools, and other dangerous inſtruments of amuſement, be kept out of his reach. If a Carteſian will not, on any account, believe his own exiſtence, except I grant him his *Cogito ergo ſum*, far be it from me to deprive the poor man of that conſolation. The reaſoning indeed is bad, but the principle is good; and a good principle is ſo valuable a thing, that rather than oblige a man to renounce it, I would diſpenſe with the ſtrict obſervance of a logi-

cal

cal precept. If a ſtar-gazer cannot ſee the inhabitants of the moon with one perſpective, let him tie a ſcore of them together, with all my heart. If a virtuoſo is inclined to look at the ſun through a microſcope, and at rotten cheeſe through a teleſcope, to apply ear-trumpets to his eyes, and equip his two ears with as many pairs of ſpectacles, he has my full permiſſion; and much good may it do him. Theſe amuſements are idle, but they are innocent. The Carteſian, if the truth were known, would be found neither the better nor the worſe for his enthymeme. The ſtar-gazer hath not atchieved a ſingle glimpſe of his lunar friends, but ſees more confuſedly than before: however, he may comfort himſelf with this reflection, that one may paſs through life with the character of a very honeſt and tolerably happy man, though he ſhould never have it in his power to extend the ſphere of his acquaintance beyond this ſublunary globe. The virtuoſo takes a wrong, and indeed a very prepoſterous method, for improving his ſight and hearing: but if he is careful to confine theſe frolics to his moſt private apartment, and never boaſt in public of his

his auditory, or optical apparatus, he may live comfortably and reſpectably enough, though he ſhould never ſee the ſpots in the ſun, nor the briſtles on a mite's back.

I would, however, earneſtly exhort my friend the metaphyſician, to believe himſelf a free agent upon the bare authority of his feelings, and not to ſuppoſe Nature ſuch a bungler in her trade, as firſt to intend to impoſe upon him, and then inadvertently give him ſagacity to ſee through the impoſture. Indeed, if it were a matter of perfect indifference, whether we believe our moral feelings or diſbelieve them, I ſhould not object to the uſe of a little diſbelief now and then, by way of experiment or cordial, provided it were a thing that a reaſonable man could take any pleaſure in. But I am convinced, that habitual dram-drinking is not more pernicious to our animal nature, than habitual ſcepticiſm to our rational. And when once this ſcepticiſm comes to affect our moral ſentiments, or active principles, all is over with us: we are in the condition of a man intoxicated; fit only for raving, dozing, and doing miſchief.

But, alas! the metaphyſician is too headſtrong

headſtrong to follow my advice. It would be a fine thing indeed, ſays he, if gentlemen were to yield to the dictates of nature. Is there a ſingle dictate of nature to which people of faſhion now-a-days pay any regard? No, no; the world is grown wiſer. As to this ſentiment of moral liberty, I very much queſtion its title to be ranked with the dictates of nature. It ſeems to be a piece of vile ſophiſtication, a paltry prejudice, hatched by the nurſe, and foſtered by the prieſt. I am determined to take it roundly to taſk, and to examine its pretenſions with the eye of a philoſopher and freethinker.—Very well, Sir, you may take your own way; it requires no ſkill in magic to be able to foretell the conſequence. A traveller no ſooner quits the right road, on ſuppoſition of its being wrong, than he gets into one that is really ſo. If you ſet out in your inquiry, with ſuſpecting the principles of common ſenſe to be erroneous, you have little chance of falling in with other principles that are not erroneous.

The reſult of the metaphyſical inquiry is as follows. "Every human action muſt pro-
"ceed from ſome motive as its cauſe. The

" motive or cauſe muſt be ſufficient to pro-
" duce the action or effect; otherwiſe it is
" no motive: and, if ſufficient to produce
" it, muſt neceſſarily produce it; for eve-
" ry effect proceeds neceſſarily from its
" cauſe, as heat neceſſarily proceeds from
" fire. Now, the immediate cauſes of ac-
" tion are volitions, or energies of the will:
" theſe ariſe neceſſarily from paſſions or ap-
" petites, which proceed neceſſarily from
" judgements or opinions; which are the
" neceſſary effect of external things, or of
" ideas, operating, according to the neceſ-
" ſary laws of nature, upon our ſenſes,
" intellect, or fancy: and theſe ideas, or
" things, preſent themſelves to our powers
" of perception, as neceſſarily as light pre-
" ſents itſelf when we turn our open eyes
" to the ſun. In a word, every human
" action is the effect of a ſeries of cauſes,
" every one of which doth neceſſarily pro-
" duce its own proper effect: ſo that if the
" firſt operate, all the reſt muſt follow. It
" is confeſſed, that the action proceeds
" immediately from volition, and is there-
" fore properly called voluntary: but the
" *primum mobile*, or firſt cauſe, of the ac-
" tion, is ſomething as independent on
" our

"our will, as the production of the great-
"grandfather is independent on the grand-
"ſon. Between phyſical and moral neceſ-
"ſity there is no difference; the pheno-
"mena of the moral world being no leſs
"neceſſary than thoſe of the material.
"And, to conclude, if we are conſcious of
"a feeling or ſentiment of moral liberty,
"it muſt be a deceitful one; for no paſt
"action of our lives could have been pre-
"vented, and no future action can poſſi-
"bly be contingent. Therefore man is
"not a free, but a neceſſary agent."

This is juſt ſuch a concluſion as I ſhould have expected; for thus it always hath been, and will be, when the dictates of common ſenſe are queſtioned and diſputed. The exiſtence of body, the exiſtence of the ſoul, the reality of our idea of power, the difference between moral and intellectual virtue, the certainty of the inference from an effect to the cauſe, and many other ſuch truths, dictates of common ſenſe, have been called in queſtion, and argued upon. And what is the reſult? Why truly it has been found, that there is no body, that there is no ſoul, that we have no idea of power, that mo-

ral and intellectual virtue are not different, and that a cauſe is not neceſſary to the production of that which hath a beginning. And now the liberty of human actions is queſtioned and debated, what could we expect, but that it would ſhare the ſame fate! But paſſing this for the preſent *, which, however, ſeems to merit attention, we ſhall here only inquire, whether this doctrine of neceſſity be not in ſome material points extremely ſimilar to that of the non-exiſtence of matter.

1. Of this doctrine we obſerve, in the firſt place, that, if any regard is to be had to the meaning of words, and if human actions may reaſonably be taken for the ſigns of human ſentiments, all mankind have, in all ages, been of a different opinion. The number of profeſſed philoſo-

* Some readers may poſſibly, on this occaſion, call to mind a certain ſaying of an old Greek author, who, tho' now obſolete, was in his day, and for ſeveral ages after, accounted a man of conſiderable penetration. I neither mention his name, nor tranſlate his words, for fear of offending (pardon a fond author's vanity) *my polite readers*.

ΑΝΘ' ΩΝ ΤΗΝ ΑΓΑΠΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑΣ ΟΥΚ ΕΔΕΞΑΝΤΟ — ΔΙΑ ΤΟΥΤΟ ΠΕΜΨΕΙ ΑΥΤΟΙΣ Ὁ ΘΕΟΣ ΕΝΕΡΓΕΙΑΝ ΠΛΑΝΗΣ, ΕΙΣ ΤΟ ΠΙΣΤΕΥΣΑΙ ΑΥΤΟΥΣ ΤΩ ΨΕΥΔΕΙ. —

phers

phers who have maintained that all things happen through unavoidable neceſſity, is but ſmall: for we muſt not imagine, that all the ancient Fataliſts were of this opinion. The Stoics were Fataliſts by profeſſion; but they ſtill endeavoured, as well as they could, to reconcile fate with moral freedom; and the firſt ſentence of Epictetus contains a declaration, that appetite, opinion, deſire, averſion, and all our actions, are in our own power. We ſee, in Cicero's fragment *De Fato*, and in the beginning of the ſixth book of Aulus Gellius, by what ſubterfuges and diſtinctions the Stoic Chryſippus reconciled the ſeemingly oppoſite principles of fate and free-will. I am not ſurpriſed, that what he ſays on this ſubject is unſatisfactory: for many Chriſtians have puzzled themſelves to no purpoſe in the ſame argument. But though the manner in which the divine preſcience is exerted be myſterious and inexplicable, it doth not follow, that the freedom of our will is equally ſo. Of it we may be, and we are, competent judges. It is ſufficiently intimated to every man by his own experience; and every man is ſatisfied with this intimation,

and

and by his conduct declares, that he truſts to it as certain and authentic. Nothing can be a clearer proof, that the ſentiment of moral liberty is one of the moſt powerful in human nature, than its having been ſo long able to maintain its ground, and often in oppoſition to other popular opinions ſeemingly repugnant. The notion of fate hath prevailed much in the world, and yet could never ſubvert this ſentiment even in the vulgar. If it be aſked, where the vulgar opinions of ancient times are to be found? I anſwer, that in the writings of the moſt popular poets we have a chance to find them more genuine than in ſyſtems of philoſophy. To advance paradoxes, and conſequently to diſguiſe facts, is often the moſt effectual recommendation of a philoſopher: but a poet muſt conform himſelf to the general principles and manners of mankind; otherwiſe he can never become a general favourite.

Now the ſyſtem of Homer and Virgil concerning fate and free-will, is perfectly explicit. "Homer aſſigns three cauſes" I quote the words of Mr Pope "of all the "good and evil that happens in this world, "which he takes a particular care to diſ-

"tinguiſh.

"tinguiſh. Firſt, the will of God, ſuperior "to all. Secondly, deſtiny or fate, meaning "the laws and order of nature, affecting the "conſtitutions of men, and diſpoſing them "to good or evil, proſperity or misfor-"tune; which the Supreme Being, if it "be his pleaſure, may over-rule, (as he "is inclined to do in the caſe of Sarpe-"don *); but which he generally ſuffers to "take effect. Thirdly, our own free-will, "which either by prudence overcomes "thoſe natural influences and paſſions, or "by folly ſuffers us to fall under them †." In regard to ſome of the decrees of fate, Homer informs us, that they were conditional, or ſuch as could not take effect, except certain actions were performed by men. Thus Achilles had it in his power to continue at Troy, or to return home before the end of the war. If he choſe to ſtay, his life would be ſhort and glorious; if to return, he was to enjoy peace and lei-

* Iliad, xvi. 433.

† See Iliad, i. 5. xix. 90. Odyſſ. i. 7. 39. See Pope's notes on theſe paſſages.

ſure

ſure to a good old age *. He prefers the former, though he well knew what was to follow: and I know not whether there be any other circumſtance in the character of this hero, except his love to his friend and to his father, which ſo powerfully recom-

* Μήτηρ γάρ τέ με φησὶ δυὰ, Θέτις ἀργυρόπεζα
Διχθαδίας κῆρας φερέμεν θανάτοιο τέλοσδε—&c. *Iliad* ix. 415.

My fates long ſince by Thetis were diſclos'd,
And each alternate, life or fame, propos'd.
Here if I ſtay before the Trojan town,
Short is my date, but deathleſs my renown;
If I return, I quit immortal praiſe
For years on years, and long-extended days. *Pope.*

On voit (ſays M. Dacier in her note on this paſſage) partout dans Homere des marques qu'il avoit connu cette double deſtinée des hommes, ſi neceſſaire pour accorder le libre arbitre avec la predeſtination. En voicy un teſmoignage bien formel et bien exprès. Il y a deux chemins pour tous les hommes: s'ils prennent celuy-la, il leur arrivera telle choſe; s'ils prennent celuy-cy, leur ſort ſera different.

Sophocles, in like manner, repreſents the decree of deſtiny concerning Ajax, as conditional. The anger of Minerva againſt that hero was to laſt only one day: if his friends kept him within doors during that ſpace, all would be well; if they ſuffered him to go abroad unattended, his death was inevitable. *Ajax Maſtig.* 772. 794. 818. Εἰ μὲν ἔνδον μένει (ſays the ſcholiaſt), σωθήσεται· εἰ δὲ μὴ, ἀπόλλυται. διὰ τοῦτο δὲ τὸ δίτλον τῦ μοιριδίου δηλοῖ. ὡς καὶ Ὅμηρος, Διχθαδίας κῆρας φερέμεν θανάτοιο τελόσδε.

Sophoeles, apud H. Steph. 1588. *p.* 48.

mends

mends him to our regard. This gloomy reſolution inveſts him with a mournful dignity, the effects of which a reader of ſenſibility often feels at his heart, in a ſentiment made up of admiration, pity, and horror. But this by the by. —— According to Virgil, the completion, even of the abſolute decrees of fate, may be retarded by the agency of beings inferior to Jupiter *: a certain term is fixed to every man, beyond which his life cannot laſt; but before this period arrives, he may die, by accidental misfortune, or deſerved puniſhment †: to virtue and vice neceſſity reaches not at all ‡.

In

* Non dabitur regnis (eſto) prohibere Latinis,
Atque immota manet fatis Lavinia conjux;
At trahere, atque moras tantis licet addere rebus.
Æneid. vii 313.

† Nam quia nec fato, merita nec morte peribat,
Sed miſera ante diem, ſubitoque accenſa furore,
Nondum illi flavum Proſerpina vertice crinem
Abſtulerat.——*Æneid.* iv. 696.

‡ Stat ſua cuique dies; breve et irreparabile tempus
Omnibus eſt vitæ; ſed famam extendere factis,
Hoc virtutis opus.——*Æneid.* x. 467.

I agree with Servius, (not. in Æneid. x.) that the philoſophical maxims of poets are not always conſiſtent. The

In all the hiſtories I have read of ancient or modern, ſavage or civilized nations, I find the conduct of mankind hath ever been ſuch as I ſhould expect from creatures poſſeſſed of moral freedom, and conſcious of it. Several forms of falſe religion, and ſome erroneous commentaries on the true, have impoſed tenets inconſiſtent with this freedom; but men have ſtill acted, notwithſtanding, as if they believed themſelves to be free. Creeds, ex-

reaſon is plain: poets muſt imitate the ſentiments of men under the influence of paſſion, ariſing from good or bad fortune; and in the language of paſſion no body expects to find conſiſtency. But I cannot agree with that annotator, in ſuppoſing the paſſage quoted from the 4th book inconſiſtent with that quoted from the 10th; and that the former is according to the Epicurean, and the latter according to the Stoical, philoſophy. In the latter paſſage, it is ſaid, that a certain day or time is appointed by fate for the utmoſt limit of every man's life: in the former, the very ſame thing is implied; only it is ſaid further, that Dido died before her time; and there is nothing in the 10th book that inſinuates the impoſſibility of this. The ſentiments contained in theſe three quotations are conformable to Homer's theology, and to one another: and it deſerves our notice, that the firſt comes from the mouth of Juno, the ſecond from the poet or his muſe, and the third from Jupiter himſelf; whence I infer, that they were agreeable to the poet's creed, or at leaſt to the popular creed of his age.

preſſed

preſſed in general terms, may eaſily be impoſed on the ignorant, and the ſelfiſh; by the former they are miſunderſtood, by the latter diſregarded: but to overpower a natural inſtinct is a difficult taſk; and a doctrine which is eaſily ſwallowed when propoſed in general terms, may prove wholly diſguſtful when applied to a particular caſe.

"The belief of a deſtiny," ſays Mr Macaulay in his hiſtory of St Kilda *, "is one "of the ſtrongeſt articles of this people's "creed: and it will poſſibly be found upon "examination, that the common people, "in all ages, and in moſt countries, give in- "to the ſame notion. At St Kilda, fate "and providence are much the ſame "thing. After having explained theſe "terms, I aſked ſome of the people there, "Whether it was in their power to do "good and evil? The anſwer made by "thoſe who were unacquainted with the "ſyſtematical doctrines of divinity was, "That the queſtion was a very childiſh "one; as every man alive muſt be con- "ſcious, that he himſelf is a free agent."

* p. 243.

——If it be true, as I believe it is, that the common people in moſt countries are inclined to acknowledge a deſtiny or fate; and if it be alſo true, that they are conſcious of their own free agency notwithſtanding; this alone would convince me, though I had never conſulted my own experience, that the ſentiment of moral liberty is one of the ſtrongeſt in human nature. For how many of their vices might they not excuſe, if they could perſuade themſelves, or others, that theſe proceed from cauſes as independent on their will, as thoſe from which ſtorms, earthquakes, and eclipſes, ariſe, and the temperature of ſoils and ſeaſons, and the ſound and unſound conſtitutions of the human body! Such a perſuaſion, however, we find not that they have at any time entertained or attempted; from which I think there is good reaſon to conclude, that it is not in their power.

There is no principle in man, religion excepted, which hath produced ſo great revolutions, and made ſuch a figure in the hiſtory of the world, as the love of political liberty: of which indeed all men do not form the ſame notion; ſome placing it

it in the power of doing what they pleaſe, others in the power of doing what is lawful; ſome in being governed by laws of their own making, and others in being governed by equitable laws, and tried by equitable judges:—but of which it is univerſally agreed, that it leaves in our power many of our moſt important actions. And yet, ſay Mr HUME and the Fataliſts, all things happen through irreſiſtible neceſſity, and there is not in the human mind any idea of any power. Strange! that ſo many, eſpecially among the beſt, the braveſt, and the wiſeſt of men, ſhould have been ſo paſſionately enamoured of an inconceivable non-entity, as to abandon, for its ſake, their eaſe, their health, their fortunes, and their lives! At this rate we are wonderfully miſtaken, when we ſpeak of Don Quixote as a madman; and of Leonidas, Brutus, Wallace, Hampden, Paoli, as wiſe, and good, and great. The caſe it ſeems is juſt the reverſe: theſe heroes deſerve no other name than that of raving bedlamites; and the illuſtrious knight of La Mancha, to whom the object of his valour was at leaſt a conceivable phantom, was a perſon of excellent

excellent ſenſe and moſt perfect knowledge of the world.

Do not all mankind diſtinguiſh between mere harm and injury? Is there one rational being unacquainted with this diſtinction? If a man were to act as if he did not comprehend it, would not the world pronounce him a fool? And yet this diſtinction is perfectly incomprehenſible, except we ſuppoſe ſome beings to act neceſſarily, and others from free choice. A man gives me a blow, and inſtantly I feel reſentment: but a byſtander informs me, that the man is afflicted with the epilepſy, which deprives him of the power of managing his limbs; that the blow was not only without deſign, but contrary to his intention, and that he could not poſſibly have prevented it. My reſentment is gone, though I ſtill feel pain from the blow. Can there be any miſtake in this experience? Can I think that I feel reſentment, when in reality I do not feel it? that I feel no reſentment, when I am conſcious of the contrary? And if I feel reſentment in the one caſe, and not in the other, it is certain, there ſeems to me to be ſome diſſimilitude between them. But it

it is only in reſpect of the intention of him who gave the blow that there can be any diſſimilitude: for all that I learn from the information by which my reſentment was extinguiſhed is, that what I ſuppoſed to proceed from an evil intention, did really proceed from no evil intention, but from the neceſſary effect of a material cauſe, in which the will had no concern. What ſhall we ſay then? that the diſtinction between injury and mere harm, acknowledged by all mankind, doth imply, that all mankind ſuppoſe the actions of moral beings to be free? or ſhall we ſay, that reſentment, though it ariſes uniformly in all men on certain occaſions, doth yet proceed from no cauſe; the actions which do give riſe to it being in every reſpect the ſame with thoſe which do not give riſe to it?

Further, all men expect, with full aſſurance, that fire will burn to-morrow; but all men do not with full aſſurance expect, that a thief will ſteal to-morrow, or a miſer refuſe an alms to a beggar, or a debauchee commit an act of intemperance, even though opportunities offer. If I had found, on blowing up my fire this morning,

ing, that the flame was cold, and converted water into ice, I ſhould have been much more aſtoniſhed, than if I had detected a man reputed honeſt in the commiſſion of an act of theft. The former I would call a prodigy, a contradiction to the known laws of nature: of the latter I ſhould ſay, that I am ſorry for it, and could never have expected it; but I would not ſuppoſe any prodigy in the caſe. All general rules, with regard to the influence of human characters on human actions, admit of exceptions; but the general laws of matter admit of none. Ice was cold, and fire hot, ever ſince the creation; hot ice, and cold fire, are, according to the preſent conſtitution of the world, impoſſible: but that a man ſhould ſteal to-day, who never ſtole before, is no impoſſibility at all. The coldneſs of the flame I ſhould doubtleſs think owing to ſome cauſe, and the diſhoneſty of the man to ſome ſtrange revolution in his ſentiments and principles; but I never could bring myſelf to think the man as paſſive in regard to this revolution, as the fire muſt be ſuppoſed to be in regard to the cauſe by which its nature is changed. The man has done what he ought

ought not to have done, what he might have prevented, and what he deſerves puniſhment for not preventing.—This is the language of all rational beings. But the fire is wholly unconſcious and inert. Who will ſay that there is the ſame neceſſity in both caſes! *

Mr

* Fataliſts are fond of inferring moral neceſſity from phyſical, in the way of analogy. But ſome of their arguments on this topic are ridiculouſly abſurd. "There "is," ſays Voltaire's *Ignorant Philoſopher*, "nothing "without a cauſe. An effect without a cauſe are words "without meaning. Every time I have a will, this can "only be in conſequence of my judgement good or bad; "this judgement is neceſſary; therefore ſo is my will." —All this hath been ſaid by others: but what follows is, I believe, peculiar to this *Ignorant Philoſopher*. "In "effect," continues he, "it would be very ſingular, "that all nature, all the planets, ſhould obey eternal "laws, and that there ſhould be a little animal, five feet "high, who, in contempt of theſe laws, could act as he "pleaſed, ſolely according to his caprice." Singular! aye ſingular indeed. So very ſingular, that yours, Sir, if I miſtake not, is the firſt human brain that ever conceived ſuch a notion. If man be free, no body ever dreamed that he made himſelf ſo in contempt of the laws of nature; it is in conſequence of a law of nature that he is a free agent. But paſſing this, let us attend to the reaſoning. The planets are not free agents;—therefore it would be very ſingular that man ſhould be one. Not a whit more ſingular, than that this ſame animal of five feet ſhould perceive, and think, and read, and write, and ſpeak; attributes which no aſtronomer

Mr HUME, in an eſſay on this ſubject, maintains, that the appearances in the moral and material world are equally uniform, and equally neceſſary; nay, and acknowledged to be ſo, both by philoſophers and by the vulgar. In proof of this, he prudently confines himſelf to general topics, on which he declaims with ſome plauſibility. Had he deſcended to particular inſtances, as we have done, the fallacy of his reaſoning would have been glaringly manifeſt. Human nature hath been nearly the ſame in all ages. True. For all men poſſeſs nearly the ſame faculties, which are employed about nearly the ſame objects, and deſtined to operate within the ſame narrow ſphere. And if a

of my acquaintance has ever ſuppoſed to belong to the planets, notwithſtanding their brilliant appearance, and ſtupendous magnitude. We do too much honour to ſuch reaſoning, when we reply to it in the bold but ſublime words of a great genius:

Know'ſt thou th'importance of a ſoul immortal?
Behold this midnight-glory, worlds on worlds!
Amazing pomp! redouble this amaze;
Ten thouſand add; add twice ten thouſand more;
Then weigh the whole; ONE SOUL outweighs them all,
And calls th' aſtoniſhing magnificence
Of unintelligent creation poor. *Complaint, Night 7.*

man

man have power to chuſe one of two things, to act or not to act, he has all the liberty we contend for. How is it poſſible, then, that human nature, taken in the groſs, ſhould not be found nearly the ſame in all ages! But if we come to particulars, we ſhall not perhaps find two human characters exactly alike. In two of the moſt congenial characters on earth, the ſame cauſes will not produce the ſame effects; nay, the ſame cauſes will not always produce the ſame effects even in the ſame character.

Other Fataliſts acknowledge, that the free agency of man is univerſally felt and believed. One writer affirms, "That tho' "man in truth is a neceſſary agent, ha-"ving all his actions determined by fixed "and immutable laws, yet this being "concealed from him, he acts with the "conviction of being a free agent *."— Concealed from him! who conceals it? Does the author of nature conceal it,— and this writer diſcover it! What deference is not due to the judgement of a

* Eſſays on the principles of Morality and Natural Religion, p. 202. Edinburgh 1751.

metaphyſician, whoſe ſagacity is ſo irreſiſtibly (I had almoſt ſaid omnipotently) penetrating! But, good Sir, as you are powerful, you ſhould have been merciful. It was not kind to rob poor mortals of this crumb of comfort which had been provided for them in their ignorance; nor generous to publiſh ſo openly the ſecrets of Heaven, and ſo baffle the deſigns of Providence by a few ſtrokes of your pen. By the by, it is a lucky thing this mighty genius did not flouriſh in the earlier ages. If the laws of nature, after maintaining their authority for ſix thouſand years, are ſo little able to ſtand before him, who knows what havock he might have made among them in the infancy of their eſtabliſhment! — In truth, metaphyſic is a perplexing affair to the paſſions, as well as to the judgement. The blunders of theſe ingenious gentlemen are ſometimes ſo abſurd, that not to be merry is impoſſible; and ſometimes ſo impious, that not to be angry were unpardonable: but often they partake ſo much of both qualities, that one knows not with what temper of mind to contemplate them:

" To

" To laugh, were want of goodneſs, and of
" grace;
" And to be grave, exceeds all power of
" face.

But why inſiſt ſo long on the univerſal acknowledgement of man's free agency? To me it is as evident, that all men believe themſelves free, as that all men think. I cannot ſee the heart; I judge of the ſentiments of others from their outward behaviour; from the higheſt to the loweſt, as far as hiſtory and experience can carry me, I find the conduct of human beings ſimilar in this reſpect to my own: and of my own free agency I have never yet been able to entertain the leaſt doubt. " Here " then we have an inſtance of a doctrine " advanced by ſome philoſophers, in di- " rect contradiction to the general belief " of all men in all ages." This is a repetition of the firſt remark formerly made on the non-exiſtence of matter.

2. The ſecond was to this purpoſe: " The reaſoning by which this doctrine is " ſupported, though long accounted unan- " ſwerable, did never produce a ſerious " and ſteady conviction; common ſenſe " ſtill

" ſtill declared it to be falſe; we were ſor-
" ry to find the powers of human reaſon
" ſo limited as not to afford a logical con-
" futation of it; we were convinced it me-
" rited confutation, and flattered ourſelves
" that one time or other it would be con-
" futed."

I ſhall here take it for granted, that the ſcheme of neceſſity hath not as yet been fully confuted; and on this ſuppoſition (which the Fataliſts can hardly fail to acknowledge a fair one) I would aſk, whether the remark juſt now quoted be applicable to the reaſonings urged in behalf of that ſcheme? My experience tells me, it is. After giving the advocates for neceſſity a fair hearing, my belief is exactly the ſame as before. I am puzzled perhaps, but not convinced, no not in the leaſt degree. In reading ſome late eſſays on this ſubject, I find many things allowed to paſs without ſcruple, which I cannot poſſibly admit: and when I have got to the end, and aſk myſelf, whether I am a free or a neceſſary agent, nature recurs upon me ſo irreſiſtibly, that the inveſtigation I have juſt finiſhed ſeems (as Shakeſpeare ſays) " like the fierce vexation of a dream," which,

which, while it laſted, had ſome ſemblance of reality, but now, when it is gone, appears to have been altogether a deluſion. This is prejudice, you ſay; be it ſo. Before the confutation of BERKELEY's ſyſtem, would it have been called prejudice not to be convinced by his arguments? I know not but it might; but I am ſure, that of ſuch prejudice no honeſt man, nor lover of truth, needs be aſhamed. I confeſs, that when I enter upon the controverſy in queſtion, I am not wholly indifferent; I am a little biaſſed in favour of common ſenſe, and I cannot help it: yet if the reaſoning were concluſive, I am confident it would breed in my mind ſome ſuſpicion, that my ſentiment of moral liberty is ambiguous. As I experience nothing of this kind, my conviction remaining the ſame as before, what muſt I infer? Surely I muſt infer, and I ſin againſt my own underſtanding if I do not infer, that though the reaſoning be ſubtle, the doctrine is abſurd.

But what if a man be really convinced by that reaſoning, that he is a neceſſary agent? Then I expect he will think and act according to his conviction. If he continue

tinue to act and think as he did before, and as I and the reſt of the world do now, he muſt pardon me if I ſhould ſuſpect his conviction to be inſincere. For let it be obſerved, that the Fataliſts are not ſatisfied with calling their doctrine probable; they affirm, that it is certain, and reſts on evidence not inferior to demonſtration. If, therefore, it convince at all, it muſt convince thoroughly. Between rejecting it as utterly falſe, and receiving it as undeniably true, there is no medium to a conſiderate perſon. And let it be obſerved further, that the changes which the real belief of fatality muſt produce in the conduct and ſentiments of men, are not ſlight and imperceptible, but, as will appear afterwards, important and ſtriking. If you ſay, that the inſtincts of your nature, the cuſtoms of the world, and the force of human laws, oblige you to act like free agents, you acknowledge fatality to be contrary to nature and common ſenſe; which is the point I want to prove.

Clay is not more obſequious to the potter, than words to the ſkilful diſputant. They may be made to aſſume almoſt any form, to enforce almoſt any doctrine. So true it is,

is, that much may be ſaid on either ſide of moſt queſtions, that we have known dealers in controverſy who were always of the ſame mind with the author whom they read laſt. We have ſeen theories of morality deduced from pride, from ſympathy, from ſelf-love, from benevolence; and all ſo plauſible, as would ſurpriſe one who is unacquainted with the ambiguities of language. Of theſe the advocates for ſimple truth are leſs careful to avail themſelves, than their paradoxical antagoniſts. The arguments of the former, being more obvious, ſtand leſs in need of illuſtration; thoſe of the latter require all the embelliſhments of eloquence and refinement to recommend them. Robbers ſeldom go abroad without arms; they examine every corner and countenance with a penetrating eye, which habitual diſtruſt and circumſpection have rendered intenſely ſagacious: the honeſt man walks careleſsly about his buſineſs, intending no harm, and ſuſpecting none. It cannot be denied, that philoſophers do often, in the uſe of words, impoſe on themſelves as well as others; an ambiguous word ſlipping in by accident will often perplex a whole ſubject, to the

equal ſurpriſe of both parties; and perhaps, in a long courſe of years, it ſhall not be diſcovered from whence the perplexity ariſeth. This was never more remarkably the caſe, than in the controverſy about the exiſtence of matter; and this no doubt is one great hindrance to the utter confutation of the doctrine of neceſſity. Fataliſts indeed make a ſtir, and ſeem much in earneſt, about ſettling the ſignification of words: but "words beget words," as Bacon well obſerveth; and it cannot be expected, that they who are intereſted in ſupporting a ſyſtem will be ſcrupulouſly impartial in their definitions.

Further, previous to all influence from habit and education, the intellectual abilities of different men are very different in reſpect of reaſoning, as well as of common ſenſe. Some men, ſagacious enough in perceiving truth, are but ill qualified to reaſon about it; while others, not ſuperior in common ſenſe, or intuitive ſagacity, are much more dextrous in deviſing and confuting arguments. If you propoſe a ſophiſm to the latter, you are at once contradicted and confuted; the former, tho' they cannot confute you, are perhaps equally

qually ſenſible of your falſe doctrine, and unfair reaſoning; they know, that what you ſay is not true, though they cannot tell in what reſpect it is falſe. Perhaps all that is wanting to enable them to confute as well as contradict, is only a little practice in ſpeaking and wrangling: but ſurely this affects not the truth or falſehood of propoſitions. What is falſe is as really ſo to the perſon who perceives its falſity, without being able to prove it, as to him who both perceives and proves; and it is equally falſe, before I learn logic, and after.—Is it not therefore highly unreaſonable to expect conviction from every antagoniſt who cannot confute you, and to aſcribe to prejudice what is owing to the irreſiſtible impulſe of unerring nature?

I have converſed with many people of ſenſe on the ſubject of this controverſy concerning liberty and neceſſity. To the greater part the arguments of Clarke and others, in vindication of liberty, ſeemed quite ſatisfying; others owned themſelves puzzled with the ſubtleties of thoſe who took the oppoſite ſide of the queſtion; ſome repoſed with full aſſurance on that conſciouſneſs of liberty which every man

feels in his own breaſt: in a word, as far as my experience goes, I have found all the impartial, the moſt ſagacious, and moſt virtuous, part of mankind, enemies to fatality in their hearts; willing to conſider the arguments for it as rather ſpecious than ſolid; and diſpoſed to receive, with joy and thankfulneſs, a thorough vindication of human liberty, and a logical confutation of the oppoſite doctrine.

3. It hath been ſaid, That philoſophers are anſwerable, not for the conſequences, but only for the truth, of their tenets; that if a doctrine be true, its being attended with diſagreeable conſequences will not render it falſe. We readily acquieſce in this remark; but we imagine it cannot be meant of any truth but what is certain and incontrovertible. No genuine truth did ever of itſelf produce effects inconſiſtent with real utility *. But many principles paſs for truth, which are far from deſerving that honourable appellation. Some give it to all doctrines which have been defended with ſubtlety, and which, whether ſeriouſly believed or not, have never been logically confuted. But to affirm,

* Ζητῶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ὑφ' ἧς οὐδεὶς πώποτε ἐβλάβη. Marc. Aurel.

that

that all ſuch doctrines are certainly true, would argue the moſt contemptible ignorance of human language, and human nature. It is therefore abſurd to ſay, that the bad conſequences of admitting ſuch doctrines ought not to be urged as arguments againſt them. Now, there are many perſons in the world, of moſt reſpectable underſtanding, who would be extremely averſe to acknowledge, that the doctrine of neceſſity hath ever been demonſtrated beyond all poſſibility of doubt; I may therefore be permitted to conſider it as a controvertible tenet, and to expoſe the abſurdities and dangerous conſequences with which the belief of it may and muſt be attended.

Mr HUME endeavours to raiſe a prejudice againſt this method of refutation. He probably foreſaw, that the tendency of his principles would be urged as an argument againſt them; and being ſomewhat apprehenſive of the conſequences, as well he might, he inſinuates, that all ſuch reaſoning is no better than perſonal invective. "There is no method of reaſoning," ſays he, "more common, and yet none "more blameable, than in philoſophical "debates

" debates to endeavour the refutation of " any hypotheſis, by a pretence of its dan- " gerous conſequences to religion and mo- " rality. When any opinion leads into ab- " ſurdities, it is certainly falſe; but it is " not certain that an opinion is falſe, be- " cauſe it is of dangerous conſequence. " Such topics therefore ought entirely to " be forborn; as ſerving nothing to the " diſcovery of truth, but only to make the " perſon of an antagoniſt odious *." If your philoſophy be ſuch, that its conſequences cannot be unfolded without rendering your perſon odious, pray, Mr HUME, who is to blame? You, who contrive and publiſh it; or I, who criticiſe it? There is a kind of philoſophy ſo ſalutary in its effects, as to endear the perſon of the author to every good man: why is not yours of this kind? If it is not, as you yourſelf ſeem to apprehend, do you think, that I ought to applaud your principles, or ſuffer them to paſs unexamined, even though I am conſcious of their pernicious tendency? or that, out of reſpect to your perſon, I ought not to put others

* Eſſay on Liberty and Neceſſity, part 2.

on

on their guard againſt them? Surely you cannot be ſo blinded by ſelf-admiration, as to think it the duty of any man to ſacrifice the intereſt of mankind to your intereſt, or rather to your reputation as a metaphyſical writer: if you do think ſo, I muſt take the liberty to differ from your judgement in this, as in many other matters.

Nor can I agree to what our author ſays of this method of reaſoning, that it tends nothing to the diſcovery of truth. Does not every thing tend to the diſcovery of truth, which diſpoſeth men to think for themſelves, and to conſider opinions with attention, before they adopt them? And have not many well-meaning perſons raſhly adopted a plauſible opinion on the ſuppoſition of its being harmleſs, who, if they had been aware of its bad tendency, would have proceeded with more caution, and made a much better uſe of their underſtanding?

This is truly a notable expedient for determining controverſy in favour of licentious theories. An author publiſhes a book, in which are many doctrines fatal to human happineſs, and ſubverſive of human ſociety. If, from a regard to truth, and to mankind,

mankind, we endeavour to expoſe them in their proper colours, and, by diſplaying their dangerous and abſurd conſequences, to deter men from raſhly adopting them without examination; our adverſary immediately exclaims, "This is not fair "reaſoning; this is perſonal invective." Were the ſentiments of the public to be regulated by this exclamation, licentious writers might do what miſchief they pleaſed, and no man durſt appear in oppoſition, without being hooted at for his want of breeding. It is happy for us all, that the law is not to be browbeaten by inſinuations of this kind; otherwiſe we ſhould hear ſome folks exclaim againſt it every day, as one of the moſt ungenteel things in the world. And truly they would have reaſon: for it cannot be denied, that an indictment at the Old Bailey has much the air of a perſonal invective; and baniſhment or burning in the hand amounts nearly to a perſonal aſſault; nay, both have often this expreſs end, to make the perſon of the criminal odious: and yet, in his judgement perhaps, there was no great harm in picking a pocket of a handkerchief, value eleven pence, provided it

was

was done with a good grace.- Let not the majeſty of ſcience be offended by this alluſion; I mean not to argue from it, for it is not quite ſimilar to the caſe in hand. That thoſe men act the part of good citizens, who endeavour to overturn the plaineſt principles of human knowledge, and to ſubvert the foundations of all religion, I am far from thinking; but I ſhould be extremely ſorry to ſee any other weapons employed againſt them, than thoſe of reaſon and ridicule chaſtiſed by decency and truth. Other weapons this cauſe requires not; nay, in this cauſe all other weapons would do more harm than good. And let it ſtill be remembered, that the object of our ſtrictures is not men, but books; and that they incur our cenſure, not becauſe they bear certain names, but becauſe they contain certain principles. Theſe remarks relate rather to the doctrines of ſcepticiſm in general, than to this of neceſſity in particular; which I am not ignorant that many men, reſpectable both for their talents and principles, have aſſerted. I preſume, however, they would have been more cautious, if they had attend-

ed to the conſequences that may be drawn from it. — To which I now return.

Some of the Fataliſts are willing to reconcile their ſyſtem with our natural notions of moral good and evil; but all they have been able to do is, to remove the difficulty a ſtep or two further off. But the moſt conſiderable of that party are not very ſolicitous to render theſe points conſiſtent. If they can only eſtabliſh neceſſity, they leave natural religion to ſhift for itſelf. Mr HUME in particular affirms, that on his principles it is impoſſible for natural reaſon to vindicate the character of the Deity *. Had this author been poſſeſſed of one grain of that modeſty which he recommends in the concluſion of his eſſay; had he thought it worth his while to ſacrifice a little pittance of ignominious applauſe to the happineſs of human kind; he would have ſhuddered at the thought of inculcating a doctrine which he knew to be irreconcileable with this great firſt principle of religion; and of which, therefore, he muſt have known, that it tended

* Eſſay on Liberty and Neceſſity, *ſub fin.*

to

to overturn the only durable foundation of human happineſs.

The advocates for liberty, on the other hand, have univerſally eſpouſed the cauſe of virtue, and zealouſly aſſerted the infinite wiſdom and purity of the divine nature. Now, I confeſs, that this very conſideration is, according to my notion of things, a ſtrong argument in favour of the laſt-mentioned doctrine. Here are two opinions; the one inconſiſtent with the firſt principles of natural religion, as ſome of thoſe who maintain it acknowledge, as well as with the experience, the belief, and the practice, of the generality of rational beings; the other perfectly conſiſtent with religion, conſcience, and common ſenſe. If the reader believe, with me, that the Deity is infinitely good and wiſe, he cannot balance a moment between them; nor heſitate to affirm, that the univerſal belief of the former would produce much miſchief and miſery to mankind. If he be prepoſſeſſed in favour of fatality, he ought, however, before he acquieſce in it as true, to be well aſſured, that the evidences of natural religion, particularly of the divine exiſtence and attri-

butes, are weaker than the proofs that have been urged in behalf of neceſſity. But will any one ſay, that this doctrine admits of a proof, as unexceptionable as that by which we evince the being and attributes of God? I appeal to his own heart, I appeal to the experience and conſciouſneſs of mankind; — are you as thoroughly convinced, that no paſt action of your life could poſſibly have been prevented, and that no future action can poſſibly be contingent, as that God is infinitely wiſe, powerful, and good? — Examine the evidence of both propoſitions, examine with candour the inſtinctive ſuggeſtions of your own mind; — and then tell me, whether you find atheiſm or man's moral liberty hardeſt to be believed.

Perhaps I ſhall be told, that the belief of moral liberty is attended with equal difficulties; for that, to reconcile the contingency of human actions with the preſcience of God, is as impoſſible, as to reconcile neceſſity with his goodneſs and wiſdom. Others have anſwered this objection at length; I make therefore only two brief remarks upon it. 1. As it implies

plies not any reflection on the divine power, to ſay, that it cannot perform impoſſibilities; ſo neither, I preſume, doth it imply any reflection on his knowledge, to ſay, that he cannot foreſee as certain, what is really not certain, but only contingent. Yet he ſees all poſſible effects of all poſſible cauſes: and our freedom to chuſe good or evil can no more be conceived to interfere with the final purpoſes of Providence, than our power of moving our limbs is inconſiſtent with our inability to remove mountains. 2. No man will take it upon him to ſay, that he diſtinctly underſtands the manner in which the Deity acts, perceives, and knows: but the incomprehenſibleneſs of his nature will never induce men to doubt his exiſtence and attributes, unleſs there be men who fancy themſelves infallible, and of infinite capacity. Shall I then conclude, becauſe I cannot fully comprehend the manner in which the divine preſcience operates, that therefore the Deity is not infinitely perfect? or that, therefore, I cannot be certain of the truth of a ſentiment which is warranted by my conſtant experience, and by that of all mankind? Shall I ſay, that becauſe

becauſe my knowledge is not infinite, therefore I have no knowledge? Becauſe I know not when I ſhall die, does it follow, that I cannot be certain of my being now alive? Becauſe God hath not told me every thing, ſhall I refuſe to believe what he hath told me? That ſuch a concluſion ſhould be drawn from ſuch premiſes, is, in my judgement, as contrary to reaſon, as to ſay, that becauſe I am ignorant of the cauſe of magnetical attraction, therefore I ought not to believe that the needle points to the north.—That I am a free agent, I know and believe; that God foreſees whatever can be foreſeen, as he can do whatever can be done, I alſo know and believe: nor have the Fataliſts ever proved, nor can they ever prove, that the one belief is inconſiſtent with the other.

The aſſerters of human liberty have always maintained, that to believe all actions and intentions neceſſary, is the ſame thing as to believe, that man is not an accountable being, or, in other words, no moral agent. And indeed this notion is natural to every perſon who has the courage to truſt his own experience, without ſeeking

to

to puzzle plain matter of fact with verbal diſtinctions and metaphyſical refinement. But, it is ſaid, the ſenſe of moral beauty and turpitude ſtill remains with us, even after we are convinced, that all actions and intentions are neceſſary; that this ſenſe maketh us moral agents; and, therefore, that our moral agency is perfectly conſiſtent with our neceſſary agency. But this is nothing to the purpoſe; it is putting us off with mere words. For what is moral agency, and what is implied in it? This at leaſt muſt be implied in it, that we ought to do ſome things, and not to do others. But if every intention and action of my life is fixed by eternal laws, which I can neither elude nor alter, it is as abſurd to ſay to me, You ought to be honeſt to-morrow, as to ſay, You ought to ſtop the motion of the planets to-morrow. Unleſs ſome events depend upon my determination, *ought*, and *ought not*, have no meaning when applied to me. Moral agency further implies, that we are accountable for our conduct, and that if we do what we ought not to do, we deſerve blame and puniſhment. My conſcience tells me, that I am accountable for

thoſe

thoſe actions only that are in my own power; and neither blames nor approves, in myſelf or in others, that conduct which is the effect, not of choice, but of neceſſity. Convince me, that all my actions are equally neceſſary, and you ſilence my conſcience for ever, or at leaſt prove it to be a fallacious and impertinent monitor: you will then convince me, that all circumſpection is unneceſſary, and all remorſe abſurd. And is it a matter of little moment, whether I believe my moral feelings authentic and true, or equivocal and fallacious? Can any principle be of more fatal conſequence to me, or to ſociety, than to believe that the dictates of conſcience are falſe, unreaſonable, or inſignificant? Yet this is one certain effect of my becoming a Fataliſt, or even a ſceptic in regard to moral liberty.

I obſerve, that when a man's underſtanding begins to be ſo far perverted by debauchery, as to make him imagine his crimes unavoidable, from that moment he begins to think them innocent, and deems it a ſufficient apology, that in reſpect of them he is no longer a free, but a neceſſary agent. The drunkard pleads his conſtitution,

ſtitution, the blaſphemer urges the invincible force of habit, and the ſenſualiſt would have us believe, that his appetites are too ſtrong to be reſiſted. Suppoſe all men ſo far perverted as to argue in the ſame manner with regard to crimes of every kind; — then it is certain, that all men would be equally diſpoſed to think all crimes innocent. And what would be the conſequence? Licentiouſneſs, miſery, and deſolation, irremediable and univerſal. If God intended that men ſhould be happy, and that the human race ſhould continue for many generations, he certainly intended alſo, that men ſhould believe themſelves free, moral, and accountable creatures.

Suppoſing it poſſible for a man to act upon the belief of his being a neceſſary agent, let us ſee how he would behave in ſome of the common affairs of life. He does me an injury. I go to him and remonſtrate. You will excuſe me, ſays he; I was put upon it by one on whom I am dependent, and who threatened me with beggary and perdition if I refuſed to comply. I acknowledge this to be a conſiderable alleviation of the poor man's guilt.

Next day he repeats the injury; and, on my renewing my remonſtrances, Truly, ſays he, I was offered ſixpence to do it; or I did it to pleaſe my humour: but I know you will pardon me, when I tell you, that as all motives are the neceſſary cauſes of the actions that proceed from them, it follows, that all motives productive of the ſame action are irreſiſtible; and therefore, in reſpect of the agent, equally ſtrong: I am therefore as innocent now as I was formerly; for the event has proved, that the motive ariſing from the offer of ſixpence, or from the impulſe of whim, was as effectual in producing the action which you call an injury, as the motive ariſing from the fear of ruin. Notwithſtanding this fine ſpeech, I ſhould be afraid, that theſe principles, if perſiſted in, and acted upon, would ſoon bring the poor Fataliſt to Tyburn or Bedlam.

Will you promiſe to aſſiſt me to-morrow with your labour, advice, or intereſt? No, ſays the practical Fataliſt; I can promiſe nothing; for my conduct to-morrow will certainly be determined by the motive that then happens to predominate. Let your promiſe, ſay I, be your motive. How can

can you be ſo ignorant, he replies, as to imagine that our motives to action are in our own power! O ſad, O ſad! you muſt ſtudy metaphyſic, indeed you muſt. Why, Sir, our motives to action are obtruded upon us by irreſiſtible neceſſity. Perhaps they ariſe, immediately, from ſome paſſion, judgement, fancy, or (if you pleaſe) volition; but this volition, fancy, judgement, or paſſion — what is it? an effect without a cauſe? No, no; it is neceſſarily excited by ſome idea, object, or notion, which preſents itſelf independently on me, and in conſequence of ſome extrinſic cauſe, the operation of which I can neither foreſee nor prevent.— Where is the man who would chuſe this Fataliſt for his friend, companion, or fellow-citizen? who will ſay, that ſociety could at all ſubſiſt, if the generality of mankind were to think, and ſpeak, and act, on ſuch principles?

But, ſays the Fataliſt, is it not eaſy to imagine caſes in which the men who believe themſelves free, would act the part of fools or knaves? Nothing indeed is more eaſy. But let it be obſerved, that the folly or knavery of ſuch ariſes, not from their perſuaſion of their own free agency,

for many millions of this perſuaſion have paſſed through life with a fair character, but from other cauſes. I cannot conceive any greater diſcouragement from knavery and folly, than this conſideration, that man is an accountable being; and I know not how we can ſuppoſe him accountable, unleſs we ſuppoſe him free. The obvious tendency of our principles is therefore to deter men from knavery and folly; whereas it is impoſſible for a Fataliſt to act upon his own principles for one day, without rendering himſelf ridiculous or deteſtable.

The reader, if diſpoſed to purſue theſe hints, and attend, in imagination, to the behaviour of the practical Fataliſt in the more intereſting ſcenes of public and private life, may entertain himſelf with a ſeries of adventures, more ludicrous, or at leaſt more irrational, than any of thoſe for which the knight of La Mancha is celebrated. I preſume I have ſaid enough to ſatisfy every impartial mind, "That the real "and general belief of neceſſity would be "attended with fatal conſequences to "ſcience, and to human nature;" — which is a repetition of the third remark we formerly

merly made on the doctrine of the non-exiſtence of matter. *

And now we have proved, that if there was any reaſon for rejecting BERKELEY's doctrine as abſurd, and contrary to common ſenſe, before his arguments were ſhown to ariſe from the abuſe of words, there is at preſent the ſame reaſon for rejecting the doctrine of neceſſity, even on the ſuppoſition that it hath not as yet been logically confuted. Both doctrines are repugnant to the general belief of mankind; both, notwithſtanding all the efforts of the ſubtleſt ſophiſtry, are ſtill incredible; both are ſo contrary to nature, and to the condition of human beings, that they cannot be carried into practice; and ſo contrary to true philoſophy, that they cannot be admitted into ſcience, without bringing ſcepticiſm along with them, and rendering queſtionable the plaineſt principles of moral truth, and the very diſtinction between truth and falſehood. In a word, we have proved, that common ſenſe, as it teacheth us to believe and be aſſured of the exiſtence of matter, doth alſo teach

* See the end of the preceding ſection.

us to believe and be aſſured, that man is a free agent.

It would lead us too far aſtray from our preſent purpoſe, to enter upon a logical examination of the argument for neceſſity. Our deſign is only to explain, by what marks one may diſtinguiſh the principles of common ſenſe, that is, intuitive or ſelf-evident notions, from thoſe deceitful and inveterate opinions that have ſometimes aſſumed the ſame appearance. If I have ſatisfied the reader, that the free agency of man is a ſelf-evident fact, I have alſo ſatisfied him, that all reaſoning on the ſide of neceſſity, though accounted unanſwerable, is, in its very nature, and previouſly to all confutation, abſurd and irrational, and contrary to the practice and principles of all true philoſophers.

Let not the friends of liberty be diſcouraged by the perplexing arguments of the Fataliſt *. Arguments in oppoſition to ſelf-evident truth, muſt, if plauſible at all,

* There is no ſubject on which doubts and difficulties may not be ſtarted by ingenious and diſputatious men: and therefore, from the number of their objections, and the length of the controverſy to which they give occaſion, we cannot, in any caſe, conclude, that the

all, be extremely perplexing. Think what method of reaſoning a man muſt purſue, who ſets himſelf to confute any axiom in geometry, or to argue againſt the exiſtence of a ſentiment acknowledged and felt by all mankind. Indeed I cannot ſee how ſuch a perſon ſhould ever impoſe upon people of ſenſe, except by availing himſelf of expreſſions, which are either in themſelves ambiguous, or become ſo by his manner of applying them. If the ambiguity be diſcernible, the argument can have no force; if there be no ſuſpicion of ambiguity, the diſpute may be continued from generation to generation, without working any change in the ſentiments of either party. When fact is diſregarded, when intuition goes for nothing, when no ſtandard of truth is acknowledged, and every unanſwered argument is deem-

the original evidence is weak, or even that it is not obvious and ſtriking. Were we to preſume, that every principle is dubious againſt which ſpecious objections may be contrived, we ſhould be quickly led into univerſal ſcepticiſm. The two ways in which the ingenuity of ſpeculative men has been moſt commonly employed, are dogmatical aſſertions of doubtful opinions, and ſubtle cavils againſt certain truths.

Gerard's Diſſertations, ii. 4.

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ed unanſwerable, true reaſoning is at an end; and the diſputant, having long ago loſt ſight of common ſenſe, is ſo far from regaining the path of truth, that, like Thomſon's peaſant bewildered in the ſnow *, he continues "to wander on, "ſtill more and more aſtray." If any perſon will give himſelf the trouble to examine the whole controverſy concerning liberty and neceſſity, he will find, that the arguments on both ſides come at laſt to appear unanſwerable; — there is no common principle acknowledged by both parties, to which an appeal can be made, and each party charges the other with begging the queſtion. Is it not then better to reſt ſatisfied with the ſimple feeling of the underſtanding? I feel that it is in my power to will or not to will: all you can ſay about the influence of motives will never convince me of the contrary; or if I ſhould ſay that I am convinced by your arguments, my conduct muſt continually bely my profeſſion. One thing is undeniable; your words are obſcure, my feeling is not; — the feeling is univerſally attended to,

* Thomſon's Winter, verſ. 284.

acknowledged,

acknowledged, and acted upon; your words to the majority of mankind would be unintelligible, nay, perhaps they are in a great meaſure ſo even to yourſelves.

CHAP. III.

Recapitulation and Inference.

THE ſubſtance of the preceding illuſtrations, when applied to the principal purpoſe of this diſcourſe, is as followeth.

Although it be certain, that all juſt reaſoning doth ultimately terminate in the principles of common ſenſe, that is, in principles which muſt be admitted as certain, or as probable, upon their own authority, without evidence, or at leaſt without proof; even as all mathematical reaſoning doth ultimately terminate in ſelf-evident axioms: yet philoſophers, eſpecially thoſe who have applied themſelves to the inveſtigation of the laws of human nature, have not always been careful to confine the reaſoning faculty within its pro-

per ſphere, but have vainly imagined, that even the principles of common ſenſe are ſubject to the cogniſance of reaſon, and may be either confirmed or confuted by argument. They have accordingly, in many inſtances, carried their inveſtigations higher than the ultimate and ſelf-ſupported principles of common ſenſe; and by ſo doing have introduced many errors, and much falſe reaſoning, into the moral ſciences. To remedy this, it was propoſed, as a matter deſerving ſerious attention, to aſcertain the ſeparate provinces of reaſon and common ſenſe. And becauſe, in many caſes, it may be difficult to diſtinguiſh a principle of common ſenſe from an acquired prejudice; and, conſequently, to know at what point reaſoning ought to ſtop, and the authority of common ſenſe to be admitted as deciſive; it was therefore judged expedient to inquire, "Whether ſuch reaſonings as "have been proſecuted beyond ultimate "principles, be not marked with ſome pe-"culiar characters, by which they may be "diſtinguiſhed from legitimate inveſtiga-"tion." To illuſtrate this point, the doctrines of *the non-exiſtence of matter*, and *the neceſſity*

neceſſity of human actions, were pitched upon as examples; in which, at leaſt in the former of which, common ſenſe, in the opinion of all competent judges, is confeſſedly violated; — the natural effects produced upon the mind by the reaſonings that have been urged in favour of theſe doctrines, were conſidered; — and the conſequences reſulting from the admiſſion of ſuch reaſonings were taken notice of, and explained. And it was found, that the reaſonings that have been urged in favour of theſe doctrines are really marked with ſome peculiar characters, which it is preſumed can belong to no legitimate argumentation whatſoever. Of theſe reaſonings it was obſerved, and proved, "That "the doctrines they are intended to eſta- "bliſh are contradictory to the general be- "lief of all men in all ages; — That, tho' "enforced and ſupported with ſingular "ſubtlety, and though admitted by ſome "profeſſed philoſophers, they do not pro- "duce that conviction which ſound rea- "ſoning never fails to produce in the in- "telligent mind; — and, laſtly, That real- "ly to believe, and to act from a real be- "lief of, ſuch doctrines and reaſonings,

" muſt be attended with fatal conſequen-
" ces to ſcience, to virtue, to human ſocie-
" ty, and to all the important intereſts of
" mankind."

I do not ſuppoſe, that all the errors which have ariſen from not attending to the foundation of truth, and eſſential rules of reaſoning, as here explained, are equally dangerous. Some of them perhaps may be innocent; to ſuch the laſt of theſe characters cannot belong. If wholly innocent, it is of little conſequence, whether we know them to be errors or not. When a new tenet is advanced in moral ſcience, there will be a ſtrong preſumption againſt it, if contrary to univerſal opinion: for as every man may find the evidence of moral ſcience in his own breaſt, it is not to be ſuppoſed, that the generality of mankind will, for any length of time, perſiſt in an error, which their own daily experience, if attended to without prejudice, could not fail to rectify. Let, therefore, the evidence of the new tenet be carefully examined, and attended to. If it produce a full and clear conviction in the intelligent mind, and at the ſame time ſerve to explain the cauſes of the univerſality and long

long continuance of the old erroneous opinion, the new one ought certainly to be received as true. But if the aſſent produced by the new doctrine be vague, indefinite, and unſatisfying; if nature and common ſenſe reclaim againſt it; if it recommend modes of thought that are inconceivable, or modes of action that are impracticable; — it is not, it cannot, be true, however plauſible its evidence may appear.

Some will think, perhaps, that a ſtraighter and ſhorter courſe might have brought me ſooner, and with equal ſecurity, to this concluſion. I acknowledge I have taken a pretty wide circuit. This was owing in part to my love of perſpicuity, which in theſe ſubjects hath not always been ſtudied ſo much as it ought to have been; and partly, and chiefly, to my deſire of confuting, on this occaſion, (as I wiſh to have done with metaphyſical controverſy for ever), as many of the moſt pernicious tenets of modern ſcepticiſm as could be brought within my preſent plan. But the reader will perceive, that I have endeavoured to conduct all my digreſſions in ſuch

ſuch a manner, as that they might ſerve for illuſtrations of the principal ſubject.

To teach men to diſtinguiſh by intuition a dictate of commoh ſenſe from an acquired prejudice, is a work which nature only can accompliſh. We ſhall ever be more or leſs ſagacious in this reſpect, according as Heaven hath endued us with greater or leſs ſtrength of mind, vivacity of perception, and ſolidity of judgement. The method here recommended is more laborious, and much leſs expeditious. Yet this method, if I am not greatly miſtaken, may be of conſiderable uſe to enable us to form a proper eſtimate of thoſe reaſonings, which, by violating common ſenſe, tend to ſubvert every principle of rational belief, to ſap the foundations of truth and ſcience, and to leave the mind expoſed to all the horrors of ſcepticiſm. To be puzzled by ſuch reaſonings, is neither criminal nor diſhonourable; though in many caſes it may be both diſhonourable and criminal to ſuffer ourſelves to be deluded by them. For is not this to prefer the equivocal voice of a vain, ſelfiſh, and enſnaring wrangler, to the clear, the benevolent,

benevolent, the infallible dictates of nature? Is not this to bely our ſentiments, to violate our conſtitution, to ſin againſt our own ſoul? Is not this "to forſake the "fountains of living water, and to hew out "unto ourſelves broken ciſterns that can "hold no water?"

PART

PART III.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

THEY who conſider virtue as a ſubject of mere curioſity, and think that the principles of morals and properties of conic ſections ought to be explained with the ſame degree of apathy and indifference, will find abundant matter for cenſure in the preceding obſervations. As the author is not very ambitious of the good opinion of ſuch theoriſts, he will not give himſelf much trouble in multiplying apologies for what, to them, may have the appearance of keenneſs or ſeverity in the animadverſions he has hitherto made, or may hereafter make, on the principles of certain noted philoſophers. He conſiders happineſs as the end and aim of our being; and he thinks philoſophy valuable only ſo far as it may be conducive to this end. Human happineſs ſeemeth to him wholly unattainable, except by the means which virtue and religion

gion provide. He is therefore perſuaded, that while employed in pleading the cauſe of virtue, and of true ſcience, its beſt auxiliary, he ſupports, in ſome meaſure, the character of a friend to humankind; and he would think his right to that glorious appellation extremely queſtionable, if the warmth of his zeal did not bear ſome proportion to the importance of his cauſe. However ſuſpicious he may be of his ability to vindicate the rights of his fellow-creatures, he is not ſuſpicious of his inclination. He feels, that on ſuch a ſubject, he muſt ſpeak from the heart, or not ſpeak at all. For the ſpirit and manner of his diſcourſe he has no other apology to offer.

As to the principles and matter of it, he is leſs confident. Theſe, though neither viſionary nor unimportant, may poſſibly be miſunderſtood. He therefore begs leave to urge a few things, for the further vindication and illuſtration of them. To his own mind they are fully ſatisfactory; he hopes to render them equally ſo to every candid reader. Happy! if he ſhould be as ſucceſsful in eſtabliſhing conviction, as others have been in ſubverting it.

CHAP. I.

Further remarks on the conſiſtency of theſe principles with the intereſts of Science, and the Rights of Mankind.

IT may poſſibly be objected to this diſcourſe, That "it tends to diſcourage "freedom of inquiry, and to promote im-"plicit faith."

But nothing is more contrary to my deſign; as thoſe who attend, without prejudice, to the full import of what I have advanced on the ſubject of evidence, will undoubtedly perceive. Let me be permitted to repeat, that the truths in which man is moſt concerned do not lie exceedingly deep; nor are we to eſtimate either their importance, or their certainty, by the length of the line of our inveſtigation. The evidences of the philoſophy of human nature are found in our own breaſt; we need not roam abroad in queſt of them; the unlearned are judges of them as well

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as the learned. Ambiguities have ariſen, when the feelings of the heart and underſtanding were expreſſed in words; but the feelings themſelves were not ambiguous. Let a man attentively examine himſelf, with a ſincere purpoſe of diſcovering the truth, and without any bias in favour of particular theories, and he will ſeldom be at a loſs, in regard to thoſe truths, at leaſt, that are moſt eſſential to his happineſs and duty. If men muſt needs amuſe themſelves with metaphyſical inveſtigation, let them apply it, where it can do no harm, to the diſtinctions and logomachies of ontology. In the ſcience of human nature it cannot poſſibly do good, but muſt of neceſſity do infinite miſchief. What avail the obſcure deductions of verbal argument, in illuſtrating what we ſufficiently know by experience? or in ſhowing that to be fictitious and falſe, whoſe energy we muſt feel and acknowledge every moment? When therefore I find a pretended principle of human nature evinced by a dark and intricate inveſtigation, I am tempted to ſuſpect, not without reaſon, that its evidence is no where to be found but in the arguments of the theoriſt; and

theſe, when diſguiſed by quaint diſtinctions, and ambiguous language, it is ſometimes hard to confute, even when the heart recoils from the doctrine with contempt or deteſtation. If the doctrine be true, it muſt alſo be agreeable to experience: to experience, therefore, let the appeal be made; let the circumſtances be pointed out, in which the controverted ſentiment ariſeth, or is ſuppoſed to ariſe. This is to act the philoſopher, not the metaphyſician; the interpreter of nature, not the builder of ſyſtems. But let us conſider the objection more particularly.

What then do you mean by that implicit faith, to which you ſuppoſe theſe principles too favourable? Do you mean an acquieſcence in the dictates of our own underſtanding, or in thoſe of others? If the former, I muſt tell you, that ſuch implicit faith is the only kind of belief which true philoſophy recommends. I have already remarked, that, while man continues in his preſent ſtate, our own intellectual feelings are, and muſt be, the ſtandard of truth to us. All evidence productive of belief, is reſolvible into the evidence of conſciouſneſs; and comes at laſt

laſt to this point, I believe becauſe I believe, or becauſe the law of my nature determines me to believe. This belief may be called implicit; but it is the only rational belief of which we are capable: and to ſay, that our minds ought not to ſubmit to it, is as abſurd as to ſay, that our bodies ought not to be nouriſhed with food. Revelation itſelf muſt be attended with evidence to ſatisfy conſciouſneſs or common ſenſe; otherwiſe it can never be rationally believed. By the evidence of the goſpel, the rational Chriſtian is perſuaded that it comes from God. He acquieſces in it as truth, not becauſe it is recommended by others, but becauſe it ſatisfies his own underſtanding.

But if, by implicit faith, you mean, what I think is commonly meant by that term, an unwarrantable or unqueſtioned acquieſcence in the ſentiments of other men, I deny that any part of this diſcourſe hath a tendency to promote it. I never ſaid, that doctrines are to be taken for granted without examination; though I affirmed, that, in regard to moral doctrines, a long and intricate examination is neither neceſſary nor expedient. With moral

moral truth, it is the buſineſs of every man to be acquainted; and therefore the Deity has made it level to every capacity.

Far be it from a lover of truth to diſcourage freedom of inquiry! Man is poſſeſſed of reaſoning powers; by means of which he may bring that within the ſphere of common ſenſe, which was originally beyond it. Of theſe powers he may, and ought to avail himſelf; for many important truths are not ſelf-evident, and our faculties were not deſigned for a ſtate of inactivity. But neither were they deſigned to be employed in fruitleſs or dangerous inveſtigation. Our knowledge and capacity are limited; it is fit and neceſſary they ſhould be ſo: we need not wander into forbidden paths, or attempt to penetrate inacceſſible regions, in queſt of employment; the cultivation of uſeful and practical ſcience, the improvement of arts, and the indiſpenſable duties of life, will furniſh ample ſcope to all the exertions of human genius. Surely that man is my friend, who diſſuades me from attempting what I cannot perform, nor even attempt without danger. And is not he a friend to ſcience and mankind, who endeavours

deavours to diſcourage fallacious and unprofitable ſpeculation, and to propoſe a criterion by which it may be known and avoided?

But if reaſoning ought not to be carried beyond a certain boundary, and if it is the authority of common ſenſe that fixeth this boundary, and if it be poſſible to miſtake a prejudice for a principle of common ſenſe, how (it may be ſaid) are prejudices to be detected? At this rate, a man has nothing to do, but to call his prejudice a dictate of common ſenſe, and then it is eſtabliſhed in perfect ſecurity beyond the reach of argument. Doth not this furniſh a pretence for limiting the freedom of inquiry?—Having already ſaid a great deal in anſwer to the firſt part of this queſtion, I need not now ſay much in anſwer to the laſt. I ſhall only aſk, on the other hand, what method of reaſoning is the propereſt for overcoming the prejudices of an obſtinate man? Are we to wrangle with him *in infinitum*, without ever arriving at any fixed principle? That is not the way to illuſtrate truth, or rectify error. Do we propoſe to aſcertain the importance of our arguments by their number,

number, and to pronounce that the better cauſe whoſe champion gives the laſt word? This, I fear, would not mend the matter. Suppoſe our antagoniſt ſhould deny a ſelf-evident truth, or refuſe his aſſent to an intuitive probability; muſt we not refer him to the common ſenſe of mankind? If we do not, we muſt either hold our peace, or have recourſe to ſophiſtry: for when a principle comes to be intuitively true or falſe, all legitimate reaſoning is at an end, and all further reaſoning impertinent. To the common ſenſe of mankind we muſt therefore refer him ſooner or later; and if he continue obſtinate, we muſt leave him. Is it not then of conſequence to truth, and may it not ſerve to prevent many a ſophiſtical argument, and unprofitable logomachy, that we have it continually in view, that common ſenſe is the ſtandard of truth? a principle which men are not always diſpoſed to admit in its full latitude, and which, in the heat and hurry of diſpute, they are apt to overlook altogether. Some men will always be found, who think the moſt abſurd prejudices founded in common ſenſe. Reaſonable men never ſcruple to ſubmit their prejudices

prejudices or principles to examination: but if that examination turn to no account, or if it turn to a bad account; if it only puzzle where it ought to convince, and darken what it ought to illuſtrate; if it recommend impracticable modes of action, or inconceivable modes of thought; — I muſt confeſs I cannot perceive the uſe of it. This is the only kind of reaſoning that I mean to diſcourage. It is this kind of reaſoning which hath proved ſo fatal to the abſtract ſciences. In it all our ſceptical ſyſtems are founded; of it they conſiſt; and by it they are ſupported. Till the abſtract ſciences be cleared of this kind of reaſoning, they deſerve not the name of philoſophy: they may amuſe a weak and turbulent mind, and render it ſtill more weak and more turbulent; but they cannot convey any real inſtruction: they may undermine the foundations of virtue and ſcience; but they cannot illuſtrate a ſingle truth, nor eſtabliſh one principle of importance, nor improve the mind of man in any reſpect whatſoever.

By ſome it may be thought an objection to the principles of this eſſay, "That they "ſeem to recommend a method of confu-

"tation which is not ſtrictly according to "logic, and do actually contradict ſome "of the eſtabliſhed laws of that ſcience."

It will readily be acknowledged, that many of the maxims of the ſchool-logic are founded in truth and nature, and have ſo long obtained univerſal approbation, that they are now become proverbial in philoſophy. Many of its rules and diſtinctions are extremely uſeful, not ſo much for ſtrengthening the judgement, as for enabling the diſputant quickly to comprehend, and perſpicuouſly to expreſs, in what the force or fallacy of an argument conſiſts. The ground-work of this ſcience, the Dialectick of Ariſtotle, if we may judge of the whole by the part now extant, is one of the moſt ſucceſsful and moſt extraordinary efforts of philoſophic genius that ever appeared in the world. And yet, if we conſider this ſcience, with regard to its deſign and conſequences, we ſhall perhaps ſee reaſon to think, that a ſtrict obſervance of its laws is not always neceſſary to the diſcovery of truth.

It was originally intended as a help to diſcourſe among a talkative and ſprightly people. The conſtitution of Athens rendered

dered the art of public ſpeaking of very great importance, and almoſt a certain road to preferment or diſtinction. This was alſo in ſome meaſure the caſe at Rome; but the Romans were more reſerved, and did not, till about the time of Cicero, think of reducing converſation or public ſpeaking to rule. The vivacity of the Athenians, encouraged by their democratical ſpirit, made them fond of diſputes and declamations, which were often carried on without any view to diſcover truth, but merely to gratify humour, give employment to the tongue, and amuſe a vacant hour. Some of the dialogues of Plato are to be conſidered in this light; rather as exerciſes in declamation, than ſerious diſquiſitions in philoſophy. It is true, this is not the only merit even of ſuch of them as ſeem of leaſt importance. If we are often diſſatisfied with his doctrine; if we have little curioſity to learn the characters and manners of that age, whereof he hath given ſo natural a repreſentation; we muſt yet acknowledge, that as models for elegance and ſimplicity of compoſition, the moſt inconſiderable of

Plato's dialogues have very great merit. His ſpeakers often compliment each other on the beauty of their ſtyle, even when there is nothing very ſtriking in the ſentiment *. If, therefore, we would form a juſt eſtimate of Plato, we muſt regard him not only as a philoſopher, but alſo as a rhetorician; for it is evident he was ambitious to excel in both characters. But it appears not to have been his opinion, that the practice of extemporary ſpeaking and diſputing, ſo frequent in his time, had any direct tendency to promote the inveſtigation of truth, or the acquiſition of wiſdom. The Lacedemonians, the moſt reſerved and moſt ſilent people in Greece, and who made the leaſt pretenſions to a literary character, were, in his judgement, a nation not only of the wiſeſt men, but of the greateſt philoſophers. Their words were few, their addreſs not without ruſticity; but the meaneſt of them was able, by a ſingle expreſſion, dextrouſly aimed, and ſeaſonably introduced, to make the

* See the Sympoſium. Platonis opera, vol. 3. p. 198. Edit. Serran.

ſtranger

ſtranger with whom he converſed appear no wiſer than a child †.

The Athenians, accuſtomed to reduce every thing to art, and among whom the ſpirit of ſcience was more univerſal than in any other nation ancient or modern, had contrived a kind of technical logic long before the days of Ariſtotle. Their ſophiſts taught it in conjunction with rhetoric and philoſophy. But Ariſtotle brought it to perfection, and ſeems to have been the firſt who profeſſedly disjoined it from the other arts and ſciences. On his logic was founded that of the ſchoolmen. But they, like other commentators, often miſunderſtood the text, and often perverted it to the purpoſe of a favourite ſyſtem. They differed from one another in their notions of Ariſtotle's doctrine, ranged themſelves into ſects and parties; and, inſtead of explaining the principles of their maſter, made it their ſole employment to comment upon one another. Now and then men of

† Εἰ τὶς ἰθίλοι Λακεδαιμονίων τῷ φαυλοτάτῳ συγγενίσθαι, τὰ μὲν πολλὰ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις ἐυρόσει αὐτὸν φαῦλον τινα φαινόμενον, ἔπειτα ὅπου ἂν τύχοι τῶν λεγομένων, ἐνίβαλε ῥῆμα ἄξιον λόγου βραχὺ καὶ συνεστραμμένον, ὥσπερ δεινὸς ἀκοντιστὴς· ὥστε φαίνεσθαι τὸν προσδιαλεγόμενον παιδὸς μηδὲν βελτίω.

Socrates in Plat. Protagora. vol. 1. *p.* 342.

learning

learning aroſe, who endeavoured to revive the true Peripatetic philoſophy; but their efforts, inſtead of proving ſucceſsful, ſerved only to provoke perſecution; and at length the ſcholaſtic ſyſtem grew ſo corrupt, and at the ſame time ſo enormous in magnitude, that it became an inſuperable incumbrance to the underſtanding, and contributed not a little to perpetuate the ignorance and barbariſm of thoſe times. The aim of the old logic, even in its pureſt form, (ſo far at leaſt as it was a practical ſcience), was chiefly to render men expert in arguing readily on either ſide of any queſtion. But it is one thing to employ our faculties in ſearching after truth, and a very different thing to employ them equally in defence of truth and of error: and the ſame modification of intellect that fits a man for the one, will by no means qualify him for the other. Nay, if I miſtake not, the talents that fit us for diſcovering truth are rather hurt than improved by the practice of ſophiſtry. To argue againſt one's own conviction, muſt always have a bad effect on the heart, and render one more indifferent about the truth, and perhaps more incapable

pable of perceiving it. We have therefore no reaſon to think, that truth is diſcoverable by thoſe means only which the technical logic preſcribes. Ariſtotle knew the theory both of ſophiſms and ſyllogiſms, better than any other man; yet Ariſtotle himſelf is ſometimes impoſed on by ſophiſms of his own invention *. And it is remarkable, that his moral, rhetorical, and political writings, in which his own excellent judgement is very little warped by logical ſubtleties, are far the moſt uſeful, and, in point of ſound reaſoning, the moſt unexceptionable, part of his philoſophy.

The apparent tendency of the ſchool-logic is to render men diſputatious and ſceptical, adepts in the knowledge of words, but inattentive to fact and experience. It makes them fonder of ſpeaking than thinking, and therefore ſtrangers to themſelves;

* Thus he is ſaid to have proved the earth to be the centre of the univerſe by the following ſophiſm.—"Heavy bodies naturally tend to the centre of the univerſe; "we know by experience, that heavy bodies tend to the "centre of the earth; therefore the centre of the earth "is the ſame with that of the univerſe. —Which is what the logicians call *petitio principii*, or *begging the queſtion*.

ſelves; ſolicitous chiefly about rules, names, and diſtinctions, and therefore leaves them neither leiſure nor inclination for the ſtudy of life and manners. In a word, it makes them more ambitious to diſtinguiſh themſelves as the partiſans of a dogmatiſt, than as inquirers after truth. It is eaſy to ſee how far a man of this turn of mind is qualified to make diſcoveries in knowledge. To ſuch a man, indeed, the name of truth is only a pretence: he neither is, nor can be, much intereſted in the ſolidity or importance of his tenets; it is enough if he can render them plauſible; nay, it is enough if he can ſilence his adverſary by any means. The captious turn of an habitual wrangler deadens the underſtanding, ſours the temper, and hardens the heart: by rendering the mind ſuſpicious, and attentive to trifles, it weakens the ſagacity of inſtinct, and extinguiſhes the fire of imagination; it tranſforms converſation into a ſtate of warfare; and reſtrains thoſe lively ſallies of fancy, ſo effectual in promoting good-humour, which, though often erroneous, are a thouſand times more valuable than the dull correctneſs

rectneſs of a mood-and-figure diſciplinarian.

One of the firſt precepts of this art is, To reſolve to believe nothing but what we can give a reaſon for; a precept deſtructive of all truth and ſcience, as hath been fully ſhown in the former part of this diſcourſe. We muſt not, however, lay this maxim to the charge of the ancient logic. DES CARTES, and the modern ſceptics, got it from the ſchoolmen, who forged it out of ſome paſſages of Ariſtotle miſunderſtood. The philoſopher ſaid indeed, that all inveſtigation ſhould begin with doubt; but this doubt is to remain only till the underſtanding be convinced; which, in Ariſtotle's judgement, may be effected by intuitive evidence as well as by argumentative. The doctrine we have been endeavouring to illuſtrate, tends not to encourage any prejudices, or any opinions, unfriendly to truth or virtue: its only aim is, to eſtabliſh the authority of thoſe inſtinctive principles of conviction, and aſſent, which the rational part of mankind have acknowledged in all ages, and which the condition of man, in reſpect both of action and of intelligence, renders it ab-

ſurd not to acknowledge. We cannot ſuppoſe, that the human mind, unlike to all other natural ſyſtems, is made up of incompatible principles; in it, as in all the reſt, there muſt be unity of deſign; and therefore the principles of human belief, and of human action, muſt have one and the ſame tendency. But many of our modern philoſophers teach a different doctrine; endeavouring to perſuade themſelves, and others, that they ought not to believe what they cannot poſſibly diſbelieve; and tnat thoſe actions may be abſurd, and contrary to truth, the performance of which is neceſſary to our very exiſtence. If they will have it, that this is philoſophy, I ſhall not diſpute about the word; but I inſiſt on it, that all ſuch philoſophy is no better than pedantic nonſenſe; and that, if a man were to write a book, to prove, that fire is the element in which we ought to live, he would not act more abſurdly, than ſome metaphyſicians of theſe times would be thought to have acted, if their works were underſtood, and rated according to their intrinſic merit.

That every thing may be made matter of

of diſpute, is another favourite maxim of the ſchool-logic; and it would not be eaſy to deviſe one more detrimental to true ſcience. What a ſtrange propenſity theſe doctors have had to diſputation! One would think, that, in their judgement, the chief end of man is, to contradict his neighbour, and wrangle with him for ever. To attempt a proof of what I know to be falſe, and a confutation of what I know to be true, is an exerciſe from which I can never expect advantage ſo long as I deem rationality a bleſſing. I never heard it preſcribed as a recipe for ſtrengthening the ſight, to keep conſtantly blindfolded in the day-time, and put on ſpectacles whenever we go to ſleep; nor can I imagine how the ear of a muſician could be improved, by his playing frequently on an ill-tuned fiddle. And yet the ſcholaſtics ſeem to have thought, that the more we ſhut our eyes againſt the truth, we ſhall the more diſtinctly perceive it; and that the oftener we practiſe falſehood, we ſhall be the more ſagacious in detecting, and the more hearty in abhorring it. To ſuppoſe, that we may make every thing matter of diſpute, is to ſuppoſe, that we can

account for every thing. Alas! in moſt caſes, to feel and believe, is all we have to do, or can do. Deſtined for action rather than for knowledge, and governed more by inſtinct than by reaſon, we can extend our inveſtigations, eſpecially with regard to ourſelves, but a very little way. And, after all, when we acquieſce with implicit confidence in the dictates of our nature, where is the harm or the danger of ſuch a conduct? Is our life ſhortened, or health injured by it? No. Are our judgements perverted, or our hearts corrupted? No. Is our happineſs impaired, or the ſphere of our gratification contracted? Quite the contrary. Have we leſs leiſure for attending to the duties of life, and for adorning our minds with uſeful and elegant literature? We have evidently more time left for thoſe purpoſes. Why then ſo much logic? ſo many diſputes, and ſo many theories, about the firſt philoſophy? Rather than in diſguiſing falſehood, and rendering truth ſuſpicious, why do we not, with humility and candour, employ our faculties in the attainment of plain, practical, and uſeful knowledge?

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The conſequences of ſubmitting every ſentiment and principle to the teſt of reaſoning, have been conſidered already. This practice hath, in every age, tended much to confound ſcience, to prevent the detection of error, and (may we not add?) to debaſe the human underſtanding. For have we not ſeen real genius, under the influence of a diſputatious ſpirit, derived from nature, faſhion, or education, evaporate in ſubtlety, ſophiſtry, and vain refinement? Lucretius, Cicero, and Des Cartes, might be mentioned as examples. And it will be matter of laſting regret in the republic of letters, that a greater than the greateſt of theſe, I mean John Milton, had the misfortune to be born in an age, when the ſtudy of ſcholaſtic theology was deemed an eſſential part of intellectual diſcipline.

It is either affectation, or falſe modeſty, that makes men ſay they know nothing with certainty. It is true, the knowledge of man, compared with that of ſuperior beings, may be very inconſiderable; and compared with that of The Supreme, is as nothing and vanity: it is true alſo, that we are daily puzzled in attempting to account

count for the moſt familiar appearances. But it is true, notwithſtanding, that we do know, and cannot poſſibly doubt of our knowing, ſome things with certainty.

"And let the witling argue all he can,
"Theſe little things are great to little
"man *."

To be vain of any attainment, is preſumption and folly: but to think every thing diſputable, is a proof of a weak mind and captious temper. And however ſceptics may boaſt of their modeſty, in diſclaiming all pretenſions to certain knowledge, I would appeal to the man of candour, whether they or we ſeem to poſſeſs leaſt of that virtue;—they, who ſuppoſe, that they can raiſe inſurmountable objections in every ſubject; or we, who believe, that our Maker hath permitted us to know with certainty ſome few things?

In oppoſition to this practice of making every thing matter of diſpute, we have endeavoured to ſhow, that the inſtinctive ſuggeſtions of common ſenſe are the ulti-

* Goldſmith's Traveller.

mate

mate ſtandard of truth to man; that whatever contradicts them is contrary to fact, and therefore falſe; that to ſuppoſe them cogniſable by reaſon, is to ſuppoſe truth as variable as the intellectual, or as the argumentative, abilities of men; and that it is an abuſe of reaſon, and tends to the ſubverſion of ſcience, to call in queſtion the authenticity of our natural feelings.

That ſcience never proſpered while the old logic continued in faſhion, is undeniable. Lord Verulam was one of the firſt who brought it into diſrepute; and propoſed a different method of inveſtigating truth, namely, that the appearances of nature ſhould be carefully obſerved, and that, inſtead of facts being wreſted to make them fall in with theory, theory ſhould be cautiouſly inferred from facts, and from them only. The event has fully proved, that our great philoſopher was in the right: for ſcience hath made more progreſs ſince his time, and by his method, than for a thouſand years before. The court of Rome well knew the importance of the ſchool-logic in ſupporting their authority; they knew it could be employed more ſucceſsfully in diſguiſing error, than in vindicating

ting truth: and Puffendorff ſcruples not to affirm, that they patroniſed it for this very reaſon *. Let it not then be urged, as an objection to this diſcourſe, that it recommends a method of confutation which is not ſtrictly logical. It is enough for me, that the method here recommended is agreeable to good ſenſe and ſound philoſophy, and to the general notions and practices of men.

CHAP. II.

The ſubject continued. Eſtimate of Metaphyſic. Cauſes of the degeneracy of Moral Science.

THE reader hath no doubt obſerved, that I have frequently uſed the term *metaphyſic*, as if it implied ſomething worthy of contempt or cenſure. That no lover of ſcience may be offended, I ſhall now

* De Monarchia Pontificis Romani, cap. 34.

account

account for this, by explaining the nature of that metaphyſic which I conceive to be repugnant to true philoſophy, though it hath often aſſumed the name; and which, therefore, in my judgement, the friends of truth ought ſolicitouſly to guard againſt. This explanation will lead to ſome remarks that may perhaps throw additional light on the preſent ſubject.

Ariſtotle bequeathed by legacy his writings to Theophraſtus; who left them, together with his own, to Neleus of Scepſis. The poſterity of Neleus, being illiterate men, kept them for ſome time locked up; but afterwards hearing, that the king of the country was making a general ſearch for books to furniſh his library at Pergamus, they hid them in a hole below ground; where they lay for many years, and ſuffered much from worms and dampneſs. At laſt, however, they were ſold to one Apellicon, who cauſed them to be copied out; and, having (according to Strabo) a greater paſſion for books than for knowledge, ordered the tranſcribers to ſupply the chaſms, which they accordingly did, with very little judgement. When Sylla took Athens, he ſeized on Apellicon's library, and car-

ried it to Rome. Here the books of Ariſtotle were reviſed, by Tyrannio the grammarian, and afterwards by Andronicus of Rhodes, a Peripatetic philoſopher, who publiſhed the firſt complete edition of them *. To fourteen of theſe books, which it ſeems had no general title, Andronicus prefixed the words, *Ta meta ta phyſica* †, that is, the books poſterior to the phyſics; either becauſe, in the order of the former arrangement, they happened to be placed, or becauſe the editor meant that they ſhould be ſtudied, next after the phyſics. This is ſaid to be the origin of the word *Metaphyſic*.

The ſubject of theſe fourteen books is miſcellaneous: yet the Peripatetics ſeem to have conſidered them as conſtituting but one branch of ſcience; the place of which in their ſyſtem may be thus conceived. All philoſophy is either ſpeculative or practical. The practical regulates the moral and intellectual operations of men, and therefore comprehends ethics and logic. The ſpeculative reſts in the knowledge of

* Strabo, p. 609. Paris edit. 1620. Plut. Sylla.

† Τὰ μετὰ τα φυσικα

truth

truth; and is divided into three parts, to wit, Phyſics, which inquire into the nature of material ſubſtances, and the human ſoul; Mathematics, which conſider certain properties of body as abſtracted from body; and this Metaphyſic, (which Ariſtotle is ſaid to have called *Theology*, and the *Firſt Philoſophy*), which, beſides ſome remarks on truth in general, the method of diſcovering it, and the errors of former philoſophers, explains, firſt, the general properties of being, and, ſecondly, the nature of things ſeparate from matter, namely, of God, the one firſt cauſe, and of the forty-ſeven inferior deities.

Following the notion, that theſe fourteen books comprehend only one part of philoſophy, the Chriſtian Peripatetics divided metaphyſic into univerſal and particular. In the firſt, they treated of being, and its properties and parts, conſidered as it is being*: in the ſecond, of God and angels.

The ſchoolmen disjoined the philoſophy

* Metaphyſique univerſelle—a laquelle il eſt traicté de l'eſtant, et des ſes proprietez, et des parties ou membres de l'eſtant, ſelon qu'il eſt eſtant. *Bouju.*

of the human mind from phyſics, where Ariſtotle had placed it; and added it to metaphyſic, becauſe its object is an immaterial ſubſtance. So that their metaphyſic conſiſted of three parts; Ontology, in which they pretended to explain the general properties of being; Pneumatics, which treated of the human mind; and Natural Theology, which treated of the ſupreme being, and of thoſe ſpirits which have either no body at all, or one ſo very fine as to be imperceptible to human ſenſe.

From the account we have given of the manner in which Ariſtotle's works were firſt publiſhed, the reader will admit, that ſome of the errors to be found in them may reaſonably enough be imputed to the firſt tranſcribers and editors. It was a groſs error in diſtribution, to reduce God, and the inferior deities, who were conceived to be a particular ſpecies of beings, to the ſame claſs with thoſe qualities or attributes that are common to all being, and to treat of both in the ſame part of philoſophy. It was no leſs improper than if a phyſiologiſt ſhould compoſe a treatiſe, "Of "men, horſes, and identity." This inaccuracy

curacy could not have eſcaped Ariſtotle: it is to be charged on his editors, who probably miſtook a ſeries of treatiſes on various ſubjects for one treatiſe on one particular ſubject. To many this may ſeem a trifling miſtake; but it hath produced important conſequences. It led the earlier Peripatetics into the impropriety of explaining the divine exiſtence, and the general properties of being, by the ſame method of reaſoning; and it induced the ſchoolmen to confound the important ſciences of pneumatics and natural theology with the idle diſtinctions and logomachies of ontology. Natural theology ought to conſiſt of legitimate inferences from the effect to the cauſe; pneumatics, or the philoſophy of the human mind, are nothing but a detail of facts, illuſtrated, methodized, and applied to practice, by obvious and convincing reaſonings: both ſciences are founded in experience; but ontology pretends to aſcertain its principles by demonſtrations *a priori*. In fact, though ontology were, what it profeſſes to be, an explication of the general properties of being, it could not throw any light on the ſciences of natural theology and pneumatics;

pneumatics; for in them the ontological method of reaſoning would be as improper as the mathematical. But the ſyſtems of ontology that have come into my hands are little better than vocabularies of thoſe hard words which the ſchoolmen had contrived, in order to give an air of myſtery and importance to their doctrine. While, therefore, the ſciences of Natural Theology and Pneumatics were, by this prepoſterous diviſion, referred to the ſame part of philoſophy with Ontology, how was it poſſible they could proſper, or be explained by their own proper evidence! In fact, they did not proſper: experience, their proper evidence, was overlooked; and fictitious theory, diſguiſed by ontological terms and diſtinctions, and ſupported by ontological reaſoning, was ſubſtituted in its place.

Mr LOCKE was one of the firſt who reſcued the philoſophy of human nature out of the hands of the ſchoolmen, cleared it of the enormous incumbrance of ſtrange words which they had heaped upon it, and ſet the example of aſcertaining our internal operations, not by theory, but by experience. His ſucceſs was wonderful: for,

for, though he hath ſometimes fallen into the ſcholaſtic way of arguing, as in his firſt book; and ſometimes ſuffered himſelf to be impoſed on by words, as in his account of ſecondary qualities, too raſhly adopted from the Carteſians; yet hath he done more to eſtabliſh the abſtract ſciences on a proper foundation, than could have been expected from one man who derived almoſt all his lights from himſelf. His ſucceſſors, Butler and Hutcheſon excepted, have not been very fortunate. BERKELEY's book, though written with a good deſign, did more harm than good, by recommending and exemplifying a method of argumentation ſubverſive of all knowledge, and leading directly to univerſal ſcepticiſm. Mr HUME's treatiſe is ſtill more exceptionable. This author has revived the ſcholaſtic way of reaſoning from theory, and of wreſting facts to make them coincide with it. His language is indeed more modiſh, but equally favourable to ſophiſtical argument, and equally proper for giving an air of plauſibility and importance to what is frivolous or unintelligible. What regard we are to pay to his profeſſion

profeſſion of arguing from experience, hath been already conſidered.

The word *metaphyſic*, according to vulgar uſe, is applied to all diſquiſitions concerning things immaterial. In this ſenſe, the plaineſt account of the faculties of the mind, and of the principles of morals and natural religion, would be termed *metaphyſic*. Such metaphyſic, however, we are ſo far from deſpiſing or cenſuring, that we account it the ſublimeſt and moſt uſeful part of ſcience.

The epithet *metaphyſical* is alſo given to thoſe arguments or illuſtrations in the abſtract philoſophy, which are not obvious to ordinary underſtandings. But as the principles of this philoſophy, however well expreſſed, appear ſomewhat abſtruſe to one who is but a novice in the ſtudy; and as very plain principles may ſeem intricate in an author who is inattentive to his expreſſion, as the beſt authors ſometimes are, it would be unfair to reject, or conceive a prejudice againſt, every doctrine in morals that is not perfectly free from obſcurity. Yet a continued obſcurity, in matters whereof every man ſhould be a competent judge, cannot fail to breed a ſuſpicion,

cion, either that the doctrine is faulty, or that the writer is not equal to his ſubject.

The term *metaphyſical*, in thoſe paſſages of this book where it is expreſſive of cenſure, will be found to allude to that mode of abſtract inveſtigation, ſo common among the modern ſceptics and the ſchoolmen, which is ſupported, either wholly by the illuſion of words, or by that in conjunction with a partial experience; and which ſeldom fails to lead to ſuch concluſions as contradict matter of fact, or truths of indiſputable authority. It is this mode of inveſtigation that hath introduced ſo many errors into the moral ſciences; for few, even of our moſt candid moral philoſophers, are entirely free from it. The love of ſyſtem, or partiality to a favourite opinion, not only puts a man off his guard, ſo as to make him overlook inaccurate expreſſions, and indefinite ideas, but may ſometimes occaſion even a miſtake of fact. When ſuch miſtakes are frequent, and affect the moſt important truths, we muſt blame the author for want of candour, or want of capacity: when they are innocent, and recur but ſeldom, we ought to aſcribe

ſcribe them to the imperfection of human nature.

Inſtances of this metaphyſic are ſo common, that we might almoſt fill a volume with a liſt of them. Spinoſa's pretended demonſtration of the exiſtence of the one great being, by which, however, he meant only the univerſe, is a metaphyſical argument, founded in a ſeries of falſe or unintelligible, though plauſible, definitions *. BERKELEY's proof of the non-exiſtence of matter is wholly metaphyſical; and ariſeth chiefly from the miſtake of ſuppoſing certain words to have but one meaning, which really have two, and ſometimes three. The ſame author, in a book of ſermons, ſaid to have been delivered at the chapel of Trinity College, Dublin †, has endeavoured to inforce the deteſtable doctrine of paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance, by metaphyſical arguments founded on an arbitrary explication of the term *moral duty*; from which he pretends to

* See the Appendix to vol. 1. of Chev. Ramſay's Principles of Religion.

† The third edition of theſe ſermons, which are three in number, is printed at London in the year 1713.

prove,

prove, that negative moral duties muſt never, on any account, be violated; and that paſſive obedience to ſupreme power, where-ever placed, is a negative moral duty. In this inquiry, he makes no account of thoſe inſtinctive ſentiments of morality whereof men are conſcious; aſcribing them to the blood and ſpirits, or to education and habit; and maintaining, that the conduct of rational beings is to be directed, not by them, but by the dictates of ſober and impartial reaſon. LOCKE's diſcourſe againſt innate ideas and principles, is likewiſe too metaphyſical. Some of his notions on that ſubject are, I believe, right; but he hath not explained them with his wonted preciſion; and moſt of his arguments are founded on an ambiguous acceptation of the words *idea* and *innate*.

The author of the *Fable of the Bees* ſeems to have carried this mode of reaſoning as far as it will go. If there had been no ambiguous words in the Engliſh language, the underſtanding of mankind would never have been affronted with his ſyſtem. Many of our appetites become criminal only when exceſſive; and we have not al-

ways names to expreſs that degree of indulgence which is conſiſtent with virtue. The ſhameleſs word-catcher takes advantage of this, and confounds the innocent gratification with the exceſſive or criminal indulgence; calling both by the ſame name, and taking it for granted, that what he proves to be true of the one is alſo true of the other. What is it that may not be proved by this way of arguing? May not vice be proved to be virtue, and virtue to be vice? May not a regard to reputation, cleanlineſs, induſtry, generoſity, conjugal love, be proved to be as criminal as vanity, luxury, avarice, profuſion, and beaſtly ſenſuality? May it not be proved, that private virtues are private vices; and, conſequently, that private vices are public benefits? Such a concluſion is indeed ſo eaſily made out by ſuch logic, that nothing but ignorance, impudence, and a hard heart, is neceſſary to qualify a man for making it. If it is ſaid, that conſiderable genius muſt be employed in dreſſing up theſe abſurd doctrines, ſo as to render them plauſible, I would aſk, who are the perſons that think them plauſible? Never did I hear of one man of virtue or learning,

ing, who did not both deteſt and deſpiſe them. They ſeem plauſible, perhaps, to gamblers, highwaymen, and *petit maitres*; but it will not be pretended, that thoſe gentlemen have either leiſure or inclination, or even capacity, to reflect on what they read or hear, ſo as to ſeparate truth from falſehood.

Among metaphyſical writers, Mr HUME holds a diſtinguiſhed place. Every part of philoſophy becomes metaphyſic in his hands. His whole theory of the underſtanding is founded on the doctrine of impreſſions and ideas, which, as he explains it, is ſo contrary to fact, that nothing but the illuſion of words could make it paſs upon any reader. I have already given ſeveral inſtances of this author's metaphyſical ſpirit. I ſhall give only one more; which I beg leave to conſider at ſome length, that I may have an opportunity of confuting a very dangerous error, and, at the ſame time, of diſplaying more minutely, than by this general deſcription, the difference between metaphyſical and philoſophical inveſtigation.

Does any one imagine, that moral, intellectual, and corporeal virtues,—that juſtice,

ſtice, genius, and bodily ſtrength, are virtues of the ſame kind; that they are contemplated with the very ſame ſentiments, and known to be virtues by the very ſame criterion? Few, I preſume, are of this opinion; but Mr HUME has adopted it, and taken a great deal of pains to prove it. I ſhall demonſtrate, that this very important error hath ariſen, either from inaccurate obſervation, or from his being impoſed on by words not well underſtood, or rather from both cauſes.

It is true, that juſtice, great genius, and bodily ſtrength, are all uſeful to the poſſeſſor and to ſociety, and all agreeable to, or (which in this author's ſtyle amounts to the ſame thing) approved by every one who conſiders or contemplates them. They therefore, at leaſt the two firſt, completely anſwer to our author's definition of virtue *. And it would be eaſy to

* "It is the nature, and indeed the definition, of vir-
"tue, that it is a quality of the mind agreeable to, or
"approved by, every one who conſiders or contemplates
"it." *Hume's Eſſays, vol. 2. p. 333. edit. 1767. Note.*
Bodily qualities are indeed excluded by this definition, but admitted by our author in his ſubſequent reaſonings.

write

write a great book, to ſhow the reaſons why moral, intellectual, and corporeal abilities, yield pleaſure to the beholder and poſſeſſor, and to trace out a number of analogies, real or verbal, ſubſiſting between them. But this is nothing to the purpoſe: they may reſemble in ten thouſand reſpects, and yet differ as widely, as a beaſt or ſtatue differs from a man. Let us trace the author's argument to its ſource.

Virtue is known by a certain agreeable feeling or ſentiment, ariſing from the conſciouſneſs of certain affections or qualities in ourſelves, or from the view of them in others. Granted. Juſtice, humanity, generoſity, excite approbation; — a handſome face excites approbation; — great genius excites approbation: the effect or ſentiment produced is the ſame in each inſtance: the object, or cauſe, muſt therefore, in each inſtance, be of the ſame kind. This is genuine metaphyſic: but before a man can be miſled by it, he muſt either find, on conſulting his experience, that the feeling excited by the contemplation of theſe objects is the ſame in each inſtance; in which caſe I would ſay, that his

his feelings are defective, or himſelf an inaccurate obſerver of nature;—or he muſt ſuppoſe, that the word *approbation*, becauſe written and pronounced the ſame way, doth really mean the ſame thing in each of the three propoſitions above mentioned; in which caſe, I would ſay, that his judgement and ideas are confounded by the mere ſound and ſhape of a word. I am conſcious, that my approbation of a fine face is different in kind from my approbation of great genius; and that both are extremely different from my approbation of juſtice, humanity, and generoſity: if I call theſe three different kinds of approbation by the ſame general name, I uſe that name in three different ſignifications. Therefore moral, intellectual, and corporeal virtues, are not of the ſame, but of different kinds.

I confeſs, ſays our author, that theſe three virtues are contemplated with three different kinds of approbation. But the ſame thing is true of different moral virtues: piety excites one kind of approbation, juſtice another, and compaſſion a third; the virtues of Cato excite our eſteem, thoſe of Ceſar our love: if there-

fore

fore piety, juſtice, and compaſſion, be virtues of the ſame kind, notwithſtanding that they excite different kinds of approbation, why ſhould juſtice, genius, and beauty, be accounted virtues of different kinds *?—This is another metaphyſical argument; an attempt to determine by words what facts only can determine. I ſtill inſiſt on fact and experience. My ſentiments, in regard to theſe virtues, are ſo diverſified, and in each variety ſo peculiar, that I know, and am aſſured, that piety, juſtice, and humanity, are diſtinct individual virtues of the ſame kind; and that piety, genius, and beauty, are virtues of different kinds. Applied to each of the former qualities, the word *virtue* means the ſame thing: but beauty is virtue in one ſenſe, genius in another, and piety in a third.

Well, if the ſentiments excited in you by the contemplation of theſe virtues, are ſo much diverſified, and in each variety ſo peculiar, you muſt be able to explain in what reſpect your approbation of intellectual virtue differs from your approba-

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 258. Hume's Eſſays, *ubi ſupra*.

tion of moral; which I preſume you will find no eaſy taſk.—It is not ſo difficult, Sir, as you ſeem to apprehend. When a man has acted generouſly or juſtly, I praiſe him, and think him worthy of praiſe and reward, for having done his duty; when ungenerouſly or unjuſtly, I blame him, and think him worthy of blame and puniſhment: but a man deſerves neither puniſhment nor blame for want of beauty or of underſtanding; nor reward nor praiſe for being handſome or ingenious.—But why are we thought worthy of blame and puniſhment for being unjuſt, and not for being homely, or void of underſtanding? The general conſcience of mankind would reply, Becauſe we have it in our power to be juſt, and ought to be ſo; but an idiot cannot help his want of underſtanding, nor an ugly man his want of beauty. This our author will not allow to be a ſatisfactory anſwer; becauſe, ſays he, I have ſhown, that free-will has no place with regard to the actions, no more than the qualities of men *. What an immenſe metaphyſical labyrinth ſhould we have to

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 260.

run

run through, if we were to diſintangle ourſelves out of this argument in the common courſe of logic! To ſhorten the controverſy, I muſt beg leave to affirm, in my turn, that our moral actions are in our own power, though beauty and genius are not; and to appeal, for proof of this affirmation, to the ſecond part of this Eſſay, or rather to the common ſenſe of mankind.

Again, "Moral diſtinctions," ſays Mr HUME, "ariſe from the natural diſtinc-"tions of pain and pleaſure; and when "we receive thoſe feelings from the gene-"ral conſideration of any quality or cha-"racter, we denominate it virtuous or "vitious. Now I believe no one will aſ-"ſert, that a quality can never produce "pleaſure or pain to the perſon who con-"ſiders it, unleſs it be perfectly voluntary "in the perſon who poſſeſſes it *."—— More metaphyſic! and a ſophiſm too—a *petitio principii!* Here our author endeavours to confound intellectual with moral virtue, by an argument which ſuppoſeth his own theory of virtue to be true; of

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 260.

which theory this confuſion of the virtues is a neceſſary conſequence. The reader muſt ſee, that this argument, if it prove any thing at all, might be made to prove, that the ſmell or beauty of a roſe, the taſte of an apple, the hardneſs of ſteel, and the glittering of a diamond, as well as bodily ſtrength and great genius, are all virtues of the ſame kind with juſtice, generoſity, and gratitude. Still we wander from the point. How often muſt it be repeated, that this matter is to be determined, not by metaphyſical arguments founded on ambiguous words, but by facts and experience!

Have I not appealed to facts? he will ſay. "Are not all the qualities that con-"ſtitute the great man, conſtancy, forti-"tude, magnanimity, as involuntary and "neceſſary, as the qualities of the judge-"ment and imagination?*"—The term *great man* is ſo very equivocal, that I will have nothing to do with it. The vileſt ſcoundrel on earth, if poſſeſſed of a crown or title, immediately commences great man, when he has with impunity perpe-

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 259.

trated

trated any extraordinary act of wickedneſs; murdered fifty thouſand men; robbed all the houſes of half a dozen provinces; or dexterouſly plundered his own country, to defray the expence of a ruinous war, contrived on purpoſe to ſatiate his avarice, or divert the public attention from his blunders and villanies. I ſpeak of the qualities that conſtitute the *good man*, that is, of moral qualities; and theſe, I affirm, to be within every man's reach, though genius and beauty are not.

"But are not men afraid of paſſing for "good-natured, leſt that ſhould be taken "for want of underſtanding? and do they "not often boaſt of more debauches than "they have been really engaged in, to "give themſelves airs of fire and ſpirit?*" Yes: fools do the firſt to recommend themſelves to fools; and profligates the laſt, to recommend themſelves to profligates: but he is little acquainted with the human heart, who does not perceive, that ſuch ſentiments are affected, and contrary to the way of thinking that is moſt natural to mankind.

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 257.

"But

"But are not you as jealous of your cha-"racter, with regard to ſenſe and know-"ledge, as to honour and courage?*" This queſtion ought to be addreſſed to thoſe in whom courage is a virtue, and the want of it a vice: and I am certain, there is not in his Majeſty's ſervice one officer or private man, who would not wiſh to be thought rather a valiant ſoldier, though of no deep reach, than a very clever fellow, with the addition of an infamous coward.—The term *honour* is of dubious import. According to the notions of theſe times, a man may blaſpheme God, ſell his country, murder his friend, pick the pocket of his fellow-ſharper, and employ his whole life in ſeducing others to vice and perdition, and yet be accounted a man of honour; provided he be accuſtomed to ſpeak certain words, wear certain cloaths, and haunt certain company. If this be the honour alluded to by the author, an honeſt man may, for a very ſlender conſideration, renounce all pretenſions to it. But if he allude (as I rather ſuppoſe) to thoſe qualities of the heart and under-

* Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 257.

ſtanding

ſtanding which intitle one to general eſteem and confidence, Mr HUME knows, that this kind of honour is dearer to a man than life.

"Well, then, temperance is a virtue in "every ſtation; yet would you not chuſe "to be convicted of drunkenneſs rather "than of ignorance?*"—I have heard of a witty parſon, who, having been diſmiſſed for irregularities, uſed afterwards, in converſation, to ſay, that he thanked God he was not caſhiered for ignorance and inſufficiency, but only for vice and immorality. According to our author's doctrine, this ſpeech was neither abſurd nor profane: but I am ſure the generality of mankind would be of a different opinion. To be ignorant of what we ought to know, is to be deficient in moral virtue; to profeſs to know what we are ignorant of, is falſehood, a breach of moral virtue: whether theſe vices be more or leſs atrocious than intemperance, muſt be determined by the circumſtances of particular caſes. To be ignorant of what we could not know, of what we do not pro-

* See Treatiſe of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 257.

feſs

feſs to know, and of what it is not our duty to know, is no vice at all: and a man muſt have made ſome progreſs in debauchery, before he can ſay, from ſerious conviction, I would rather be chargeable with intemperance, than with ignorance of this kind.—Theſe, and many of our author's miſtakes, muſt be imputed to want of knowledge of human nature: which I ſuppoſe is owing to his having confined his obſervation chiefly to the outſide of what is called faſhionable life, where the ſentiments publicly avowed are often different from what is inwardly felt, and extremely different from the truth and ſimplicity of nature.

It appears, then, that our author's reaſoning on the preſent ſubject, is not philoſophical, but metaphyſical; being founded, not on fact, but on theory, and ſupported by ambiguous words and inaccurate experience.

The judgement of the wiſer ancients in matters of morality is doubtleſs of very great weight; but, in oppoſition to our own experience, can never preponderate; becauſe this is our ultimate ſtandard of truth. Mr HUME endeavours to confirm his

his theory of virtue by authorities from the ancients, particularly the Stoics and Peripatetics. Though he had accomplished this, we might have appealed from their opinion, as well as from his, to our own feelings. But he fails in this, as in the other parts of his proof.

It is true, the Peripatetics and Stoics made Prudence the first (not the most important) of the cardinal virtues; because they conceived it necessary to enable a man to act his part aright in life, and because they thought it their duty to take every opportunity of improving their nature: but they never said, that an incurable defect of understanding is a vice, or that it is as much our duty to be learned and ingenious, as to be honest and grateful. "All the praise of virtue consists in action," says Cicero *, in name of the Stoics, when treating of this virtue of prudence. And, when explaining the comparative merit of the several classes of moral duty, he declares, that "All knowledge which is not "followed by action, is unprofitable and "imperfect, like a beginning without an

* De officiis, lib 1. cap. 6.

" end, or a foundation without a ſuper-
" ſtructure; and that the acquiſition of the
" moſt ſublime and moſt important ſcience
" ought to be, and will by every good
" man be relinquiſhed, when it interferes
" with the duties we owe our country,
" our parents, and ſociety *." Wiſdom, indeed, he allows to be the firſt and moſt excellent of the virtues: but it is well known, that the Stoics made a diſtinction between Prudence and Wiſdom. By Prudence they meant that virtue which regulates our deſires and averſions, and fixes them on proper objects. Wiſdom was another name for mental perfection: it comprehended all the virtues, the religious as well as the ſocial and prudential; and was equally incompatible with vice, and with error †. The wiſe man, the ſtandard of Stoical excellence, was, by their own acknowledgement, an ideal character; the pureſt virtue attainable in this life being neceſſarily tainted with imperfection. Hence ſome have endeavoured to turn their notions of wiſdom into ridicule; but

* De officiis, lib. 1. cap. 43. 44.
† Id. ibid.

I think, without reaſon. For is there any thing abſurd or ridiculous in an artiſt working after a model of ſuch perfection as he can never hope to equal? In the judgement of Ariſtotle and Bacon, the true poet forms his imitations of nature after a model of ideal perfection, which perhaps hath no exiſtence but in his own mind *. And are not Chriſtians commanded to imitate the Deity himſelf, that great original and ſtandard of perfection, between whom and the moſt excellent of his creatures an infinite diſtance muſt remain for ever †?

"The ancient moraliſts," ſays Mr HUME, "made no material diſtinction a-"mong the different ſpecies of mental en-"dowments and defects ‡." To every perſon who has read them, the contrary is well known. I might here fill many a page with quotations: but a few will ſuffice. "Man's virtue and vice," ſays Marcus Aurelius, "conſiſts not in thoſe affec-

* Ariſtot. Poetica. Bacon, De augmentis ſcientiarum, lib. 2.

† Matth. v. 48.

‡ Hume's Eſſays, vol. 2. p. 387. 388.

" tions in which we are paſſive, but in ac-
" tion. To a ſtone thrown upward it is
" no evil to fall, nor good to have mount-
" ed *." And in another place, " The
" vain-glorious man placeth his good in
" the action of another; the ſenſual, in
" his own paſſive feelings; the wiſe man,
" in his own action †." " The contem-
" plative life," ſays Plutarch, " when it
" fails to produce the active, is unprofit-
" able ‡." " To acquire knowledge," ſays Lucian, " is of no uſe, if we do not alſo
" frame our lives according to ſomething
" better ‖." It is remarkable, that the Greek tragedians (I know not by what authority, for Homer's idea is very different) repreſent Ulyſſes as a character more diſtinguiſhed for political prudence or cunning, than for ſtrict moral virtue; and

* Οὔδε ἡ ἀρετὴ και κακια αὐτῦ ἐν πάσει ἄλλα ἐνεργείᾳ· τῷ ἀναρίθμητι λίθῳ οὐδὲν κακὸν τὸ κατενεχθῆναι, οὔδε ἀγαθον τὸ ἀντενεχθῆναι. *Lib.* 9. *c.* 17.

† Ο μὲν φιλόδοξος ἀλλοτρίαν ἐνέργειαν ἴδιον ἀγαθον ὑπολαμβάνει· ὁ δὲ φιλήδονος, ἴδιαν πᾶσιν· ὁ δὲ νοῦν ἔχων, ἰδίαν πρᾶξιν. *Lib.* 6. *c.* 51.

‡ Ο δὲ θεωρητικὸς βίος τῦ πρακτικῦ διαμαρτάνων, ἀνεφελὴς.
Plutarch, de Educatione.

‖ Οὐδὲν ὄφελος ἦν ἐπίστασθαι τὰ μαθήματα, εἰ μὴ τὶς ἄρα και τὸν βίον ῥυθμίζοι πρὸς τὸ βέλτιον. *Lucian Conviv.*

often

often place him in ſuch attitudes as make him appear odious on this very account *.

* See particularly Sophocles. Philoct. verſ. 100. and verſ. 1260. I beg leave to quote a few very remarkable lines. Neoptolemus having, by the advice of Ulyſſes, fraudulently got poſſeſſion of the arrows of Philoctetes, repents of what he had done, and is going to reſtore them. To deter him from his purpoſe, Ulyſſes threatens him with the reſentment of the whole Grecian army.

Neop. Σοφὸς πιφυκὼς οὐδὲν ἐξαυδᾷς σοφὸν.
Ulyſ. Σὺ δ' οὔτι φωνῆς, οὔτι δρασείας σοφὸν.
Neop. Ἀ'λλ' εἰ δίκαια, τῶν σοφῶν κρείσσω πάλι.
Ulyſ. Καί πῶς δίκαιον, ἃ γ' ἔλαβες βουλαῖς ἐμαῖς
Πάλιν μεθεῖναι ταῦτα; *Neop.* Τὴν ἁμαρτίαν
Ἀ'ισχρὰν ἁμαρτὼν, ἀναλαβεῖν παράσομαι.
Ulyſ. Στράτον δ' Ἀχαιῶν ὐ φοβῇ πράσσων τάδε;
Neop. Σὺν τῷ δικαίῳ τὸν σὸν οὐ ταρβῶ φοβον. verſ. 1278.

——— *Neop* Wiſe as thou art, Ulyſſes,
Thou talk'ſt moſt idly. *Ulyſ.* Wiſdom is not thine,
Either in word or deed. *Neop.* Know, to be juſt
Is better far than to be wiſe. *Ulyſ.* But where,
Where is the juſtice, thus unauthoris'd,
To give a treaſure back thou oweſt to me,
And to my counſels? *Neop.* I have done a wrong,
And I will try to make atonement for it.
Ulyſ. Doſt thou not fear the power of Greece? *Neop.* I fear
Nor Greece, nor thee, when I am doing right.
Francklin.

Throughout the whole play, the fire and generoſity of the young hero (ſo well becoming the ſon of Achilles) is finely oppoſed to the caution and craft of the politician, and forms one of the moſt ſtriking contraſts to be met with in poetry.

And

And Cicero, in his Treatiſe of Moral Duties, often declares, that cunning, when it violates the rules of juſtice, is criminal and deteſtable. Does Virgil conſign cripples and idiots, as well as tyrants, to Tartarus? Does he ſay, that a great memory, and handſome face, as well as a pure heart, were the paſſports to Elyſium? No. Virgil was too good a man to injure the cauſe of virtue, and too wiſe to ſhock common ſenſe, by ſo prepoſterous a diſtribution of reward and puniſhment. The impious, the unnatural, the fraudulent, the avaricious; adulterers, inceſtuous perſons, traitors, corrupt judges, venal ſtateſmen, tyrants, and the minions of tyrants, are thoſe whom he dooms to eternal miſery: and he peoples Elyſium with the ſouls of the pure and the pious, of heroes who have died in defence of their country, of ingenious men who have employed their talents in recommending piety and virtue, and of all who by acts of beneficence have merited the love and gratitude of their fellow-creatures *.

* Virgil. Æneid. vi. 547. — 665.

The

The Peripatetics held prudence to be an active principle diffuſed through the whole of moral virtue *. "None but a good "man," ſays Ariſtotle, "can be prudent;" —and, a little after, "It is not poſſible, "for a man to be properly good without "prudence, nor prudent without moral "virtue †." Will it yet be ſaid, that the ancient moraliſts made no material diſtinction between moral and intellectual virtues? Is it not evident, that, though they conſidered both as neceſſary to the formation of a perfect character, yet they deemed the latter valuable only as means to qualify us for the former, and inſignificant, or even odious, when they failed to anſwer this end?

"We may," ſays Mr HUME, "by per-"uſing the titles of the chapters in Ariſto-"tle's Ethics, be convinced, that he ranks "courage, temperance, magnificence, mag-"nanimity, modeſty, prudence, and *a man-*

* — Ἀνάγκη τὴν φρονήσιν ἕξιν εἶναι — πρακτικὴν.
Ethic. ad Nicom. vi. 5.

† Ἀδύνατον φρόνιμον εἶναι μὴ ὄντα ἀγαθον. —— Οὐχ' οἷον ἀγαθον εἶναι κυρίως ἄνευ φρονήσεως· οὐδὲ φρονιμον, ἄνευ τῆς ἠθικῆς ἀρετῆς. *Id.* vi. 13. See the elegant paraphraſe of Andronicus, the Rhodian, upon theſe paſſages.

"*ly*

"*ly freedom*, among the virtues, as well as "juſtice and friendſhip *." True; but if our learned metaphyſician had extended his reſearches a little beyond the *titles* of thoſe chapters, he would have found, that, in the philoſopher's judgement, "Moral "virtue is a voluntary diſpoſition or habit; "and that moral approbation and diſap- "probation are excited by thoſe actions "and affections only which are in our "own power, that is, of which the firſt "motion ariſes in ourſelves, and proceeds "from no extrinſic cauſe †." This is true philoſophy; it is accurate, perſpicuous, and juſt, and fixeth moſt exactly the degree of merit of our intellectual and conſtitutional virtues. A man makes proficiency in knowledge:—if in this he hath acted from a deſire to improve his nature,

* Hume's Eſſays, vol. 2. p. 388.—The term *manly freedom* doth not expreſs the meaning of the Greek ἀνδριότης. Mr HUME was perhaps miſled by the etymology: but he ought to have known, that by this word the philoſopher denotes *that virtue which conſiſts in the moderate uſe of wealth.*—— περὶ χρήματα μεσότης. See Ethic. ad Nicom. lib. 4. cap. 1. 2.

† Ethic. ad Nicom. iii. 1.—ii. 6. Mag. Mor. i. 15. Andronicus Rhodius, p. 89. 90. 188. edit. Cantab. 1679. Stephanus, in voce προαιρέτικος.

and

and qualify himſelf for moral virtue, that deſire, and the action conſequent upon it, are virtuous, laudable, and of good deſert. Is a man poſſeſſed of great genius? — this inveſts him with dignity and diſtinction, and qualifies him for noble undertakings: but this of itſelf is no moral virtue; becauſe it is not a diſpoſition reſulting from a ſpontaneous effort. Is his conſtitution naturally diſpoſed to virtue?—he ſtill hath it in his power to be vitious, and therefore his virtue is truly meritorious; tho' not ſo highly as that of another man who, in ſpite of outrageous appetites, and tempting circumſtances, hath attained an equal degree of moral improvement. A man conſtitutionally brave, generous, or grateful, commands our admiration more than another, who ſtruggles to overcome the natural baſeneſs of his temper. The former is a ſublimer object, and may be of greater ſervice to ſociety; and as his virtue is ſecured by conſtitution as well as by inclination, we repoſe in it without fear of diſappointment. Yet perhaps the latter, if his merit were equally conſpicuous, would be found equally worthy of our moral approbation. Indeed, if his virtue

be ſo irreſolute, as to leave him wavering between good and evil, he is not intitled to praiſe: ſuch irreſolution is criminal, becauſe he may and ought to correct it; we can not, and we ought not to truſt him, till we ſee a ſtrong prepoſſeſſion eſtabliſhed in favour of virtue. However, let us love virtue where-ever we find it: whether the immediate gift of Heaven, or the effect of human induſtry co-operating with divine influence, it always deſerves our eſteem and veneration.

The reader may now form an eſtimate of that author's attention, who ſays, that "the ancient moraliſts made no material "diſtinction among the different ſpecies of "mental endowments and defects, but "treated all alike under the appellation of "virtues and vices, and made them indiſ-"criminately the object of their moral rea-"ſonings." If any one is diſpoſed to think, that I have made out my point, rather by inference than by direct proof, I ſubmit to his conſideration the following paſſages, which are too plain to need a commentary.

Having propoſed a general diſtribution of our mental powers, (which amounts to this,

this, that ſome of them fit us for knowledge, and others for action), Ariſtotle proceeds in this manner. "According to "this diſtribution, virtue is alſo divided "into intellectual and moral. Of the for-"mer kind are wiſdom, intelligence, and "prudence; of the latter, temperance, and "frugal liberality. When we ſpeak of mo-"rals, we do not ſay, that a man is wiſe "or intelligent, but that he is gentle or "temperate. Yet we praiſe a wiſe man in "reſpect of his diſpoſitions [or habits]; for "laudable diſpoſitions are what we call vir-"tues *."

"The virtues of the ſoul," ſays Cicero, "and of its principal part the underſtand-"ing, are various, but may be reduced to "two kinds. The firſt are thoſe which "nature hath implanted, and which are "called *not voluntary*. The ſecond kind "are more properly called *virtues*, becauſe "they depend on the will; and theſe, as

* Διορίζεται δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀρέτη καθὰ τὴν διαφόραν ταύτην. λέγομεν γὰρ αὐτῶν τὰς μὲν διανοητικὰς, τὰς δὲ ἠθικὰς· σοφίαν μὲν, καὶ σύνεσιν, καὶ φρόνησιν, διανοητικὰς· ἐλευθεριότητα δὲ καὶ σωφροσύνην, ἠθικὰς. λέγομεν γὰρ περὶ τοῦ ἤθους, ὡ λέγομεν ὅτι σόφος, ἢ σύνετος, ἀλλ' ὅτι πρᾶος ἢ σώφρων. ἐπαινοῦμεν δὲ καὶ τὸν σοφὸν τὴν ἕξιν, τῶν ἕξεων δὲ τὰς ἐπαινετὰς ἀρετὰς λέγομεν.

Ethic. ad Nicom. lib. 1. *ſub fin.*

" objects of approbation, are tranſcend-
" ently ſuperior. Of the former kind are
" docility, memory, and all the virtues
" diſtinguiſhed by the general name of
" genius, or capacity: perſons poſſeſſed of
" them are called ingenious. The latter
" claſs comprehends *the great and genuine*
" *virtues*, which we denominate *voluntary*,
" as prudence, temperance, fortitude, ju-
" ſtice, and others of the ſame kind *."

The word *virtue* hath indeed great latitude of ſignification. It denotes any quality of a thing tending to the happineſs of a percipient being; it denotes that quality, or perfection of qualities, by which a thing

* Animi autem, et ejus animi partis quæ princeps eſt, quæque mens nominatur, plures ſunt virtutes, ſed duo prima genera: unum earum quæ ingenerantur ſuapte natura, appellanturque non voluntariæ: alterum autem earum, quæ in voluntate poſitæ, magis proprie eo nomine appellari ſolent; quarum eſt excellens in animorum laude præſtantia. Prioris generis eſt docilitas, memoria; qualia fere omnia appellantur uno ingenii nomine; eaſque virtutes qui habent ingenioſi vocantur. Alterum autem genus eſt *magnarum verarumque virtutum*, quas appellamus voluntarias, ut prudentiam, temperantiam, fortitudinem, juſtitiam, et reliquas ejuſdem generis. — Virtutes voluntariæ proprie virtutes appellantur, multumque excellunt, &c.

Cicero De Finibus, lib. 5. cap. 13. ex editione Dæviſii.

is

is fitted to anſwer its end; ſometimes it denotes power or agency in general; and ſometimes any habit which improves the faculties of the human mind. In the firſt three ſenſes we aſcribe virtue to the ſoul, and to the body, to brutes, and inanimate things; in the laſt, to our intellectual as well as moral nature. And no doubt inſtances may be found of ambiguity and want of preciſion, even in the beſt moraliſts, from an improper uſe of this word. Yet I believe this attempt of Mr HUME's is the firſt that hath been made to prove, that among theſe very different ſorts of virtue there is little or no difference. Our author ſeems indeed to have a ſingular averſion to that kind of curioſity which, not ſatisfied with knowing the names, is induſtrious to diſcover the natures of things. When he finds two or three different things called by the ſame name, he will rather write fifty pages of metaphyſic to prove that they are the ſame, than give himſelf the trouble to examine them ſo as to ſee what they really are *. Is it not

* See another remarkable inſtance, p. 256.—260. of this Eſſay.

ſtrange,

ſtrange, that a man of ſcience ſhould ever have taken it into his head, that the characteriſtic of a genus is a ſufficient deſcription of a ſpecies? He might as well have ſuppoſed, that, becauſe perception and ſelf-motion belong to animal life in general, it is therefore a ſufficient definition of man, to call him a ſelf-moving and percipient creature; from which profound principle it clearly follows, that man is a beaſt, and that a beaſt is a man.

By ſuch reaſoning as Mr HUME hath uſed on the preſent occaſion, it would be eaſy to prove any doctrine. The method is this:—and I hope thoſe who may hereafter chuſe to aſtoniſh the world with a ſyſtem of metaphyſical paradoxes, will do me the honour and the juſtice to acknowledge, that I was the firſt who unfolded the whole art and myſtery of that branch of manufacture within the compaſs of one ſhort RECIPE.—Take a word (an abſtract term is the moſt convenient) which admits of more than one ſignification; and, by the help of a predicate and copula, form a propoſition, ſuitable to your ſyſtem, or to your humour, or to any other thing you pleaſe, except truth. When laying down your

your premiſes, you are to uſe the name of the quality or ſubject, in one ſenſe; and, when inferring your concluſion, in another. You are then to urge a few equivocal facts, very ſlightly examined, (the more ſlightly the better), as a further proof of the ſaid concluſion; and to ſhut up all with citing ſome ancient authorities, either real or fictitious, as may beſt ſuit your purpoſe. A few occaſional ſtrictures on religion as an unphiloſophical thing, and a ſneer at the *Whole Duty of Man* *, or any other good book, will give your diſſertation what many are pleaſed to call a *liberal turn*; and will go near to convince the world, that you are a candid philoſopher, a manly free-thinker, and a very fine writer.

It is to no purpoſe that our author calls this a verbal diſpute, and ſometimes condeſcends to ſoften matters by an *almoſt*, or ſome ſuch evaſive word. His doctrine obviouſly tends to confound all our ideas of virtue and duty, and to make us conſider ourſelves as mere machines, acted upon by external and irreſiſtible impulſe, and

* See Hume's Eſſays, vol. 2. p. 388. edit. 1767.

not

not more accountable for moral blemiſhes, than for ignorance, want of underſtanding, poverty, deformity, and diſeaſe. If the reader think as ſeriouſly of the controverſy as I do, he will pardon the length of this digreſſion.

I hope it now appears, that there is a kind of metaphyſic, which, whatever reſpectable names it may have aſſumed, deſerves contempt or cenſure from every lover of truth. If it be detrimental to ſcience, it is equally ſo to the affairs of life. Whenever one enters on buſineſs, the metaphyſical ſpirit muſt be laid aſide, otherwiſe it will render him ridiculous, perhaps deteſtable. Sure it will not be ſaid, that any portion of this ſpirit is neceſſary to form a man for ſtations of high importance. For theſe, a turn to metaphyſic would be as effectual a diſqualification as want of underſtanding. The metaphyſician is cold, wavering, diſtruſtful, and perpetually ruminates on words, diſtinctions, arguments, and ſyſtems. He attends to the events of life with a view chiefly to the ſyſtem that happens for the time to predominate in his imagination, and to which he is anxious to reconcile every

every appearance. His obſervation is therefore partial and inaccurate, becauſe he contemplates nature through the medium of his favourite theory, which is always falſe; ſo that experience, which enlarges, aſcertains, and methodiſes, the knowledge of other men, ſerves only to aggravate the natural darkneſs and confuſion of his. His literary ſtudies are conducted with the ſame ſpirit, and produce the ſame effects.—Whereas to the adminiſtration of great affairs, truth and ſteadineſs of principle, conſtancy of mind, intuitive ſagacity, extreme quickneſs in apprehending the preſent and anticipating the future, are indiſpenſably neceſſary. Whatever tends to weaken and unſettle the mind, to cramp the imagination, to fix the attention on minute and trifling objects, and withdraw it from thoſe enlarged proſpects of nature and mankind, in which true genius loves to expatiate; whatever hath this tendency, and ſurely metaphyſic hath it, is the bane of genius, and of every thing that is great in human nature.

In the lower walks of life, our theoriſt will be oftener the object of ridicule than

of deteſtation. Yet even here, the man is to be pitied, who, in matters of moment, happens to be connected with a ſtanch metaphyſician. Doubts, diſputes, and conjectures, will be the plague of his life. If his aſſociate form a ſyſtem of action or inaction, of doubt or confidence, he will ſtick by it, however abſurd, as long as he has one verbal argument unanſwered to urge in defence of it. In accounting for the conduct of others, he will reject obvious cauſes, and ſet himſelf to explore ſuch as are more remote and refined. Making no proper allowance for the endleſs varieties of human character, he will ſuppoſe all men influenced, like himſelf, by ſyſtem and verbal argument: certain cauſes, in his judgement, muſt of neceſſity produce certain effects; for he has twenty reaſons ready to offer, by which it is demonſtrable, that they cannot fail: and it is well, if experience at laſt convince him, that there was a ſmall verbal ambiguity in his principles, and that his views of mankind were not quite ſo extenſive as they ought to have been. In a word, unleſs he be very good-natured, and of a paſſive diſpoſition, his refinements will do more harm

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than even the ſtiff ſtupidity of an idiot. If inclined to fraud, or any ſort of vice, he will never be at a loſs for an evaſion; which, if it ſhould not ſatisfy his aſſociate, will perplex and plague him moſt effectually. I need not enlarge; the reader may conceive the reſt. To aid his fancy, he will find ſome traits of this character, in one of its moſt amuſing and leaſt diſagreeable forms, delineated with a maſterly pencil in the perſon of old Eſquire Shandy.

It is aſtoniſhing to conſider, how little mankind value the good within their reach, and how ardently they purſue what nature hath placed beyond it; how blindly they over-rate what they have no experience of, and how fondly they admire what they do not underſtand. This verbal metaphyſic hath been dignified with the name of *ſcience*, and verbal metaphyſicians have been reputed philoſophers, and men of genius. Doubtleſs a man of genius may, by the faſhion of the times, be ſeduced into theſe ſtudies: but that particular caſt of mind which fits a man for them, and recommends them to his choice, is not genius, but a minute and feeble underſtanding;

derſtanding; capable indeed of being made, by long practice, expert in the management of words; but which never did, and never will, qualify any man for the diſcovery or illuſtration of ſentiment. For what is genius? What, but ſound judgement, ſenſibility of heart, and a talent for accurate and extenſive obſervation? And will ſound judgement prepare a man for being impoſed on by words? will ſenſibility of heart render him inſenſible to his own feelings, and inattentive to thoſe of other men? will a talent for accurate and extenſive obſervation, make him ignorant of the real phenomena of nature, and, conſequently, incapable of detecting what is falſe or equivocal in the repreſentation of facts? And yet, when facts are fairly and fully repreſented; when human ſentiments are ſtrongly felt, and perſpicuouſly deſcribed; and when the meaning of words is aſcertained, and the ſame word hath always the ſame idea annexed to it, — there is an end of metaphyſic.

A body is neither vigorous nor beautiful, in which the ſize of ſome members is above, and that of others below, their due proportion: every part muſt have its pro-

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per ſize and ſtrength, otherwiſe the reſult of the whole will be deformity and weakneſs. Neither is real genius conſiſtent with a diſproportionate ſtrength of the reaſoning powers above thoſe of taſte and imagination. Thoſe minds in whom all the faculties are united in their due proportion, are far ſuperior to the puerilities of metaphyſical ſcepticiſm. They truſt to their own feelings, which are ſtrong and deciſive, and leave no room for heſitation, or doubts about their authenticity. They ſee through moral ſubjects at one glance; and what they ſay, carries both the heart and the underſtanding along with it. When one has long drudged in the dull and unprofitable pages of metaphyſic, how pleaſing the tranſition to a moral writer of true genius! Would you know what that genius is, and where it may be found? Go to Shakeſpeare, to Bacon, to Monteſquieu, to Rouſſeau; and when you have ſtudied them, return, if you can, to HUME, and HOBBES, and MALEBRANCHE, and LEIBNITZ, and SPINOSA. If, while you learned wiſdom from the former, your heart exulted within you, and rejoiced to contemplate the ſublime and ſuc-

ceſsful

ceſsful efforts of human intellect; perhaps it may now be of uſe, as a leſſon of humility, to have recourſe to the latter, and, for a while, to behold the picture of a ſoul wandering from thought to thought, without knowing where to fix; and from a total want of feeling, or a total ignorance of what it feels, miſtaking names for things, verbal diſtinctions and analogies for real difference and ſimilitude, and the obſcure inſinuations of a bewildered underſtanding, puzzled with words, and perverted with theory, for the ſentiments of nature, and the dictates of reaſon. A metaphyſician, exploring the receſſes of the human heart, hath juſt ſuch a chance for finding the truth, as a man with microſcopic eyes would have for finding the road. The latter might amuſe himſelf with contemplating the various mineral ſtrata that are diffuſed along the expanſion of a needle's point, but of the face of nature he could make nothing: he would ſtart back with horror from the caverns yawning between the mountainous grains of ſand that lie before him; but the real gulf or mountain he could not ſee at all.

Is the futility of metaphyſical ſyſtems exaggerated

exaggerated beyond the truth by this alluſion? Tell me, then, in which of thoſe ſyſtems I ſhall find ſuch a deſcription of the ſoul of man as would enable me to know what it is. A great and excellent author obſerves, that if all human things were to periſh except the works of Shakeſpeare, it might ſtill be known from them what ſort of creature man was *: — A ſentiment nobly imagined, and as juſt as it is ſublime! Can the ſame thing be ſaid with truth of any one, or of all the metaphyſical treatiſes that have been written on the nature of man? If an inhabitant of another planet were to read *The Treatiſe of Human Nature*, what notions of human nature could he gather from it? — That man muſt believe one thing by inſtinct, and muſt alſo believe the contrary by reaſon: — That the univerſe is nothing but a *heap* of perceptions unperceived by any ſubſtance: — That this univerſe, for any thing man knows to the contrary, might have made itſelf, that is, exiſted before it exiſted; as we have no reaſon to believe that it proceeded from any cauſe, notwithſtanding

* Lord Lyttelton's Dialogues of the Dead.

ing it may have had a beginning: — That though a man could bring himſelf to believe, yea, and have reaſon to believe, that every thing in the univerſe proceeds from ſome cauſe, yet it would be unreaſonable for him to believe, that the univerſe itſelf proceeds from a cauſe: — That the ſoul of man is not the ſame this moment it was the laſt; that we know not what it is; that it is not one but many things; and that it is nothing at all; — and yet, that in this ſoul is the agency of all the cauſes that operate throughout the ſenſible creation; — and yet, that in this ſoul there is neither power nor agency, nor any idea of either: — That if thieves, cheats, and cut-throats, deſerve to be hanged, cripples, idiots, and diſeaſed perſons, ſhould not be permitted to live; becauſe the imperfections of the latter, and the faults of the former, are on the very ſame footing, both being diſapproved by thoſe who contemplate them: — That the perfection of human knowledge is to doubt: — That man ought to believe nothing, and yet that man's belief ought to be influenced by certain principles: — That we ought to doubt of every thing, yea of our doubts themſelves; and

therefore

therefore the utmoſt that philoſophy can do, is to give a doubtful ſolution of doubtful doubts *:—That nature continually impoſes on us, and continually counteracts herſelf, by giving us ſagacity to detect the impoſture:—That we are neceſſarily and unavoidably determined to act and think in certain caſes after a certain manner, but that we ought not to ſubmit to this unavoidable neceſſity; and that they are fools who do ſo:—That none of our actions are in our power; that we ought to exerciſe power over our actions; and that there is no ſuch thing as power:—That body and motion may be regarded as the cauſe of thought; and that body does not exiſt:—That the univerſe exiſts in the mind; and that the mind does not exiſt:—That the human underſtanding acting alone, doth entirely ſubvert itſelf, and prove by argument, that by argument nothing can be proved.——Theſe are a

* Strange as this expreſſion may ſeem, it is not without a precedent. The fourth ſection of Mr HUME's *Eſſays on the Human Underſtanding* is called, *Sceptical doubts concerning the operations of the underſtanding*; and the fifth ſection bears this title, *Sceptical ſolution of theſe doubts*.

few of the many ſublime myſteries brought to light by this great philoſopher. But theſe, however they may illuminate our terreſtrial *literati*, would convey no information to the planetary ſtranger, except perhaps, that the ſage metaphyſician knew nothing of his ſubject.

What a ſtrange detail! does not the reader exclaim? Can it be, that any man ſhould ever bring himſelf to think, or imagine that he could bring others to think, ſo abſurdly! What a taſte, what a heart muſt he poſſeſs, whoſe delight it is, to repreſent nature as a chaos, and man as a monſter; to ſearch for deformity and confuſion, where others rejoice in the perception of order and beauty; and to ſeek to imbitter the happieſt moments of human life, namely, thoſe we employ in contemplating the works of creation, and adoring their Author, by this ſuggeſtion, equally falſe and malevolent, that the moral, as well as material world, is nothing but darkneſs, diſſonance, and perplexity!

"Where all life dies, death lives, and na-
" ture breeds
"Perverſe,

"Perverſe, all monſtrous, all prodigious
"things,
"Abominable, unutterable, and worſe
"Than fables yet have feign'd, or fear
"conceiv'd!"

Were this ſyſtem a true one, we ſhould be little obliged to him who gives it to the public; for we could hardly imagine a greater misfortune than ſuch a caſt of underſtanding as would make us believe it. But, founded, as it is, in words miſunderſtood, and facts miſrepreſented; — ſupported, as it is, by ſophiſtry ſo egregious, and often ſo puerile, that we can hardly conceive how even the author himſelf ſhould be impoſed on by it; — ſurely he who attempts to obtrude it on the weak and unwary, muſt have ſomething in his diſpoſition, which to a man of a good heart, or good taſte, can never be the object of envy.

We are told, that the end of ſcepticiſm, as it was taught by Pyrrho, Sextus Empiricus, and other ancients, was to obtain indiſturbance. I know not whether this be the end our modern ſceptics have in view; if it is, the means they employ for attaining it are ſtrangely prepoſterous. If

the proſpect of nature exhibited in their ſyſtems produce tranquillity or indiſturbance, how dreadful muſt that tranquillity be! It is like that of a man, turned adrift amidſt a dark and tempeſtuous ocean, in a crazy ſkiff, with neither rudder nor compaſs, who, exhauſted by the agitations of deſpair and diſtraction, loſes at laſt all ſenſe of his miſery, and becomes totally ſtupid. In fact, the only thing that can enable ſceptics to endure exiſtence is inſenſibility. And how far that is conſiſtent with delicacy of mind, let thoſe among them explain who are ambitious of paſſing for men of taſte.

It is remarked by a very ingenious and amiable writer, that "many philoſophers "have been infidels, few men of taſte and "ſentiment *." This, if I miſtake not, holds equally true of our ſceptics in philoſophy, and infidels in religion: and it holds true of both for the ſame reaſon. The views and expectations of the infidel and ſceptic are ſo full of horror, that to a man of taſte, that is, of ſenſibility and i-

* Dr Gregory's Comparative view, p. 201. fourth edition.

magination,

magination, they are insupportable. On the other hand, what true religion and true philosophy dictate of God, and providence, and man, is so charming, so consonant with all the finer and nobler feelings in human nature, that every man of taste who hears of it must wish it to be true: and I never yet heard of one person of candour, who wished to find the evidence of the gospel satisfactory, and did not find it so. Dull imaginations and hard hearts can bear the thought of endless confusion, of virtue depressed and vice triumphant, of an universe peopled with fiends and furies, of creation annihilated, and chaos restored to remain a scene of darkness and solitude for ever and for ever: but it is not so with the benevolent and tender-hearted. Their notions are regulated by another standard; their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows are quite of a different kind.

The moral powers and the powers of taste are more congenial than is commonly imagined; and he who is destitute of the latter will ever be found as incapable to describe or judge of the former, as a man wanting the sense of smell is to decide concerning

concerning reliſhes. Nothing is more true, than that "a little learning is a dangerous "thing." If we are but a little acquainted with one part of a complicated ſyſtem, how is it poſſible for us to judge aright, either of the nature of the whole, or the fitneſs of that part! And a little knowledge of one ſmall part of the mental ſyſtem is all that any man can be allowed to have, who is defective in imagination, ſenſibility, and the other powers of taſte. Yet, as ignorance is apt to produce temerity, I ſhould not be ſurpriſed to find ſuch men moſt forward to attempt reducing the philoſophy of human nature to ſyſtem; and if they made the attempt, I ſhould not wonder that they fell into the moſt important miſtakes. Like a ſhort-ſighted landſcape-painter, they might poſſibly delineate ſome of the largeſt and roughеſt figures with tolerable exactneſs: but of the minuter objects, ſome would wholly eſcape their notice, and others appear blotted and diſtorted, on which nature had beſtowed the utmoſt harmony of proportion, and delicacy of colour.

The modern ſceptical philoſophy is as corrupt a body of ſcience as ever appeared

ed in the world. And it deſerves our notice, that the moſt conſiderable of its adherents and promoters were more eminent for ſubtlety of reaſon, than for ſenſibility of taſte. We know that this was the caſe with MALEBRANCHE, of whom we are told by M. D'Alembert, that he could not read the moſt ſublime verſes without wearineſs and diſguſt *. This was alſo the caſe with another author, to whom our later ſceptics are more obliged than they ſeem willing to acknowledge, I mean Mr HOBBES; whoſe tranſlation of Homer bears juſt ſuch a reſemblance to the Iliad and Odyſſey, as a putrefying carcaſe bears to a beautiful and vigorous human body. Of the taſte of our later ſceptics, I leave the reader to judge from his own obſervation.

The philoſophy of the mind, if ſuch as it ought to be, would certainly intereſt us more than any other ſcience. Are the ſceptical treatiſes on this ſubject intereſting? Do they bring conviction to the judgement, or delight to the fancy? Do they either reach the heart, or ſeem to

* Eſſai ſur le Gout.

proceed

proceed from it? Do they make us better acquainted with ourſelves, or better prepared for the buſineſs of life? Do they not rather infeeble and haraſs the ſoul, divert its attention from every thing that can enlarge and improve it, give it a diſreliſh for itſelf, and for every thing elſe, and diſqualify it alike for action, and for uſeful knowledge?

Other cauſes might be aſſigned for the preſent degeneracy of the moral ſciences. I ſhall mention one, which I the rather chuſe to take notice of, and inſiſt upon, becauſe it hath been generally overlooked. DES CARTES and MALEBRANCHE introduced the faſhion, which continues to this day, of neglecting the ancients in all their philoſophical inquiries. We ſeem to think, becauſe we are confeſſedly ſuperior in ſome ſciences, that we muſt be ſo in all. But that this is a raſh judgement, may eaſily be made appear, even on the ſuppoſition, that human genius is nearly the ſame in all ages.

When accidental diſcovery, long experience, or profound inveſtigation, are the means of advancing a ſcience, it is reaſonable to expect, that the improvements of

of that ſcience will increaſe with length of time. Accordingly we find, that in natural philoſophy, natural hiſtory, and ſome parts of mathematical learning, the moderns are far ſuperior to the ancients. But the ſcience of human nature, being attainable rather by intuition than by deep reaſoning or nice experiment, muſt depend for its cultivation upon other cauſes. Different ages and nations have different cuſtoms. Sometimes it is the faſhion to be reſerved and affected, at other times to be ſimple and ſincere: ſometimes, therefore, it will be eaſy, and at other times difficult, to gain a competent knowledge of human nature by obſervation. In the romances of the ſixteenth century, we ſeek for human nature in vain; the manners are all affected; prudery is the higheſt, and almoſt the only, ornament of the women, and a fantaſtical honour of the men: but the writers adapted themſelves to the prevailing taſte, and painted the manners as they ſaw them. In our own country, we have ſeen various modes of affectation ſucceſſively prevail within a few years. To ſay nothing of preſent times, every body knows how much pedantry, puritaniſm,

libertiniſm, and falſe wit, contributed to diſguiſe human nature in the laſt century. And I apprehend, that in all monarchies (except where ſociety is in a very uncultivated ſtate) one mode or other of artificial manners muſt always prevail; to the formation of which the character of the prince, the taſte of the times, and a variety of other cauſes will co-operate. In courts, it is thought neceſſary, at leaſt it ſeems to be conſidered as a matter of high importance, to eſtabliſh certain punctilios in regard to dreſs, geſticulation, and phraſeology; in the knowledge and obſervance of which conſiſts the merit of a man of faſhion. There alſo ſecrecy is expedient, and hath ſometimes been known to degenerate into hypocriſy. I know not whether honeſty, plain-dealing, and ſimple manners, were ever made the pattern of courtly behaviour; but I have been told, that there is not a court on earth, in which a man of the ſtricteſt virtue and beſt underſtanding would not appear ridiculous, if he were unacquainted with the eſtabliſhed forms. The cuſtoms of the court are imitated by the higher ranks; the middle ranks follow the higher; and the people come

come after as faſt as they can. It is, however, in the laſt-mentioned claſs where nature appears with the leaſt diſguiſe. But, unhappily, the vulgar are ſeldom objects of curioſity, either to our philoſophers or hiſtorians. The influence of theſe cauſes in diſguiſing human ſentiments will, I preſume, be greater or leſs, according as the monarchy partakes more or leſs of the nature of a free government. There is indeed one ſet of ſentiments which monarchy and modern manners are peculiarly fitted for diſcloſing, I mean, thoſe that relate to gallantry; but whether theſe tend to make human nature more or leſs known, might perhaps bear a queſtion.

Modern hiſtory ought, on many accounts, to intereſt us more than the ancient. It deſcribes manners which are familiar to us, events of which we ſee and feel the conſequences, political eſtabliſhments on which our property and ſecurity depend, and places and perſons in which experience or tradition hath already given us a concern. And yet I believe it will be generally acknowledged, that the ancient hiſtories, particularly of Greece and Rome, are more intereſting than thoſe of later times.

In fact, the moſt affecting part, both of hiſtory and of poetry, is that which beſt diſplays the characters, manners, and ſentiments of men. Hiſtories that are deficient in this reſpect may communicate inſtruction to the geographer, the warrior, the genealogiſt, and the politician; but will never pleaſe the general taſte, becauſe they excite no paſſion, and awaken no ſympathy. Now, I cannot help thinking, that the perſonages deſcribed in modern hiſtory have, with a very few exceptions, a ſtiffneſs and reſerve about them, which doth not ſeem to adhere to the great men of antiquity, particularly of Greece. I will not ſay, that our hiſtorians have leſs ability or leſs induſtry; but I would ſay, that democratical governments, like thoſe of ancient Greece, are more favourable to ſimplicity of manners, and conſequently to the knowledge of the human mind, than our modern monarchies. At Athens and Sparta, the public aſſemblies, the public exerciſes, the regular attendance given to all the public ſolemnities, whether religious or civil, and other inſtitutions that might be mentioned, gave the citizens many opportunities of being well acquainted

quainted with one another. There the great men were not cooped up in palaces and coaches; they were almoſt conſtantly in the open air, and on foot. The people ſaw them every day, converſed with them, and obſerved their behaviour in the hours of relaxation, as well as of buſineſs. Themiſtocles could call every Athenian by his name; a proof that the great men courted an univerſal acquaintance.

No degree of genius will ever make one a proficient in the ſcience of man, without accurate obſervation of human nature in all its varieties. Homer, the greateſt maſter in this ſcience ever known, paſſed the moſt of his life in travelling: his poverty, and other misfortunes, made him often dependent on the meaneſt, as his talents recommended him to the friendſhip of the greateſt; ſo that what he ſays of Ulyſſes may juſtly be applied to himſelf, that "he viſited many ſtates and nations, "and knew the characters of many men." Virgil had not the ſame opportunities: he lived in an age of more refinement, and was perhaps too much converſant in courtly life, as well as too baſhful in his deportment, and delicate in his conſtitution,

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to ſtudy the varieties of human nature, where in a monarchy they are moſt conſpicuous, namely, in the middle and lower ranks of mankind. Need we wonder, then, that in the diſplay of character he falls ſo far ſhort of his great original? Shakeſpeare was familiarly acquainted with all ranks and conditions of men; without which, notwithſtanding his unbounded imagination, it is not to be ſuppoſed, that he could have ſucceeded ſo well in delineating every ſpecies of human character, from the conſtable to the monarch, from the hero to the clown. And it deſerves our notice, that, however ignorant he might be of Latin and Greek, he was well acquainted, by tranſlation, with ſome of the ancients, particularly Plutarch, whom he ſeems to have ſtudied very cloſely, and who indeed excels all hiſtorians in exhibiting lively and intereſting views of human nature. Great viciſſitudes of fortune gave Fielding an opportunity of aſſociating with all claſſes of men, except perhaps the higheſt, whom he rarely attempts to deſcribe: Swift's way of life is well known: and I have been told, that Congreve uſed to mingle in diſguiſe with the

the common people, and paſs whole days and weeks among them.

That the ancient painters and ſtatuaries were ſuperior to the modern, is univerſally allowed. The monuments of their genius that ſtill remain, would convince us of it, even though we were to ſuppoſe the accounts given by Pliny, Lucian, and other contemporary authors, to be a little exaggerated. The uncommon ſpirit and elegance of their attitudes and proportions are obvious to every eye: and a great maſter ſeems to think, that modern artiſts, though they ought to imitate, can never hope to equal the magnificence of their ideas, or the beauty of their figures *. To account for this, we need not ſuppoſe, that human genius decays as the world grows older. It may be aſcribed, partly to the ſuperior elegance of the human form in thoſe days, and partly to the artiſts having then better opportunities of obſerving the human body, free from the incumbrances of dreſs, in all the varieties of action and motion. The ancient diſcipline of the Greeks and Romans, particularly the for-

* Freſnoy, De Arte Graphica, lin. 190.

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mer, was admirably calculated for improving the human body in health, ſtrength, ſwiftneſs, flexibility, and grace. In theſe reſpects, therefore, they could hardly fail to excel the moderns, whoſe education and manners tend rather to enervate the body, and cramp all its faculties. And as the ancients performed their exerciſes in public, and performed many of them naked, and thought it honourable to excel in them; as their cloathing was much leſs cumberſome than our Gothic apparel, and ſhowed the body to more advantage; it muſt be allowed, that their painters and ſtatuaries had far better opportunities of obſervation, than ours enjoy, who ſee nothing but awkward and languid figures, diſguiſed by an unwieldy and moſt ungraceful attire.

Will it not, then, be acknowledged, that the ancients may have excelled the moderns in the ſcience of human nature, provided it can be ſhown, that they had better opportunities of obſerving it? That this was the caſe, appears from what has been already ſaid. And that they really excelled us in this ſcience, will not be doubted by thoſe who acknowledge their

ſuperiority

ſuperiority in rhetoric and criticiſm; two arts which are founded in the philoſophy of the human mind. But a more direct proof of the point in queſtion may be had in the writings of Homer, Plutarch, and the Socratic philoſophers; which, for their admirable pictures of human nature in its genuine ſimplicity, are not equalled by any compoſitions of a later date. Of Ariſtotle I ſay nothing. We are aſſured by thoſe who have read his works, that no author ever underſtood human nature better than he. Fielding himſelf pays him this compliment; and his teſtimony will be allowed to have conſiderable weight.

Let me therefore recommend it to thoſe philoſophers who may hereafter make human nature the ſubject of their ſpeculation, to ſtudy the ancients more than our modern ſceptics ſeem to have done. If we ſet out, like the author of *The Treatiſe of Human Nature*, with a fixed purpoſe to advance as many paradoxes as poſſible; or with this fooliſh conceit, that men in all former ages were utter ſtrangers to themſelves, and to one another, and that we are the firſt of our ſpecies on whom Nature hath beſtowed any glimmerings of

diſcernment; we may depend on it, that in proportion as our vanity and arrogance are great, our ſucceſs will be ſmall. It will be, like that of a muſician, who ſhould take it into his head, that Corelli had no taſte in counterpoint, nor Handel any genius for melody; of an epic poet, who ſhould fancy, that Homer, Virgil, and Milton, were very bad writers; or of a painter, who ſhould ſuppoſe all his brethren of former times to have been unacquainted with the colours, lineaments, and proportions of viſible objects.

If Columbus, before he ſet out on his famous expedition to the weſtern world, had amuſed himſelf with writing a hiſtory of the countries he was going to viſit; would the lovers of truth, and interpreters of nature, have received any improvement or ſatisfaction from ſuch a ſpecimen of his ingenuity? And is not the ſyſtem which, without regard to experience, a philoſopher frames in his cloſet, concerning the nature of man, equally frivolous? If Columbus, in ſuch a hiſtory, had deſcribed the Americans with two heads, cloven feet, wings, and a ſcarlet complexion; and, after viſiting them, and finding his deſcription

tion falſe in every particular, had yet publiſhed that deſcription to the world, affirming it to be true, and at the ſame time acknowledging, that it did not correſpond with his experience; I know not whether mankind would have been moſt diſpoſed to blame his diſingenuity, to laugh at his abſurdity, or to pity his want of underſtanding. And yet we have ſeen a metaphyſician contrive a ſyſtem of human nature, and, though ſenſible that it did not correſpond with the real appearances of human nature, deliver it to the world as incontrovertible truth; we have heard this ſyſtem applauded as a maſterpiece of genius, and admitted as incontrovertible truth; and we have ſeen the experience of individuals, the univerſal conſent of nations, the accumulated wiſdom of ages, and every principle in philoſophy, every truth in religion, and every dictate of common ſenſe, ſacrificed to this contemptible and ſelf-contradictory chimera.

I would further recommend it to our moral philoſophers, to ſtudy themſelves with candour and attention, and cultivate an acquaintance with mankind, eſpecially with thoſe whoſe manners retain moſt of

the truth and ſimplicity of nature. Acquaintance with the great makes one a man of faſhion, but will not make him a philoſopher. They who are ambitious to merit this appellation, think nothing below them which the author of nature hath been pleaſed to create, to preſerve, and to adorn.—Away with this paſſion for ſyſtem-building! it is pedantry: away with this luſt of paradox! it is preſumption. Be equally aſhamed of dogmatical prejudice, and ſceptical incredulity; for both are as remote from the ſpirit of true philoſophy, as bullying and cowardice from true valour.

It will be ſaid, perhaps, that a general knowledge of man is ſufficient for the philoſopher; and that this particular knowledge which we recommend, is neceſſary only for the noveliſt and poet. But let it be remembered, that many important errors in moral philoſophy have ariſen from the want of this particular knowledge; and that it is by too little, not by too much, experience, by ſcanty, not by copious, induction, that philoſophy is corrupted. Men have rarely framed a ſyſtem, without firſt conſulting experience in regard

gard to some few obvious facts. We are apt to be prejudiced in favour of the notions that prevail within our own narrow circle; but we must quit that circle if we would divest ourselves of prejudice, as we must go from home if we would get rid of our provincial accent. "Horace asserts wis-"dom and good sense to be the source and "principle of good writing; for the at-"tainment of which he prescribes a care-"ful study of the Socratic, that is, moral "wisdom, and a thorough acquaintance "with human nature, that great exemplar "of manners, as he finely calls it; or, in "other words, a wide extensive view of "real practical life. The joint direction "of these two," I quote the words of an admirable critic and most ingenious philosopher, "as means of acquiring moral "knowledge, is perfectly necessary. For "the former, when alone, is apt to grow "abstracted and unaffecting; the latter, "uninstructing and superficial. The phi-"losopher talks without experience, and "the man of the world without principles. "United they supply each other's defects; "while the man of the world borrows so "much of the philosopher, as to be able

"to

"to adjuſt the ſeveral ſentiments with preciſion and exactneſs; and the philoſopher "ſo much of the man of the world, as to "copy the manners of life (which we can "only do by experience) with truth and "ſpirit. Both together furniſh a thorough "and complete comprehenſion of human "life *."

That I may not be thought a blind admirer of antiquity, I would here crave the reader's indulgence for one ſhort digreſſion more, in order to put him in mind of an important error in morals, inferred from partial and inaccurate experience, by no leſs a perſon than Ariſtotle himſelf. He argues, "That men of little genius, "and great bodily ſtrength, are by nature "deſtined to ſerve, and thoſe of better ca-"pacity, to command; that the natives "of Greece, and of ſome other countries, "being naturally ſuperior in genius, have "a natural right to empire; and that the "reſt of mankind, being naturally ſtupid, "are deſtined to labour and ſlavery †."

* Hurd's Commentary on Horace's Epiſtle to the Piſos, p. 25. edit. 4.

† De Republ. lib. 1. cap. 5. 6.

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This reaſoning is now, alas! of little advantage to Ariſtotle's countrymen, who have for many ages been doomed to that ſlavery, which, in his judgement, nature had deſtined them to impoſe on others; and many nations whom he would have conſigned to everlaſting ſtupidity, have ſhown themſelves equal in genius to the moſt exalted of humankind. It would have been more worthy of Ariſtotle, to have inferred man's natural and univerſal right to liberty, from that natural and univerſal paſſion with which men deſire it. He wanted, perhaps, to deviſe ſome excuſe for ſervitude; a practice which, to their eternal reproach, both Greeks and Romans tolerated even in the days of their glory.

Mr HUME argues nearly in the ſame manner in regard to the ſuperiority of white men over black. "I am apt to ſuſ-
"pect," ſays he, "the negroes, and in ge-
"neral all the other ſpecies of men, (for
"there are four or five different kinds), to
"be naturally inferior to the whites.
"There *never was* a civilized nation of a-
"ny other complexion than white, *nor e-*
"*ven any individual* eminent either in ac-

tion

"tion or ſpeculation. No ingenious ma-
"nufactures among them, *no* arts, no
"ſciences.—There are negro-ſlaves diſper-
"ſed all over Europe, of which *none* ever
"diſcovered any ſymptoms of ingenui-
"ty *." Theſe aſſertions are ſtrong; but I know not whether they have any thing elſe to recommend them. For, firſt, though true, they would not prove the point in queſtion, except it were alſo proved, that the Africans and Americans, even though arts and ſciences were introduced among them, would ſtill remain unſuſceptible of cultivation. The inhabitants of Great Britain and France were as ſavage two thouſand years ago, as thoſe of Africa and America are at this day. Civiliſation is the work of time. And one may as well ſay of an infant, that he can never become a man, as of a nation now barbarous, that it never can be civiliſed. Secondly, of the facts here aſſerted, no man could have ſufficient evidence, except from a perſonal acquaintance with all the negroes that now are, or ever were, on the face of the earth. Thoſe people write no hiſtories; and all the

* Hume's Eſſay on National Characters.

reports

reports of all the travellers that ever viſited them, will not amount to any thing like a proof of what is here affirmed. But, thirdly, we know that theſe aſſertions are not true. The empires of Peru and Mexico could not have been governed, nor the metropolis of the latter built after ſo ſingular a manner, in the middle of a lake, without men eminent both for action and ſpeculation. Every body has heard of the magnificence, good government, and ingenuity, of the ancient Peruvians. The Africans and Americans are known to have many ingenious manufactures and arts among them, which even Europeans would find it no eaſy matter to imitate. Sciences indeed they have none, becauſe they have no letters; but in oratory, ſome of them, particularly the Indians *of the Five Nations*, are ſaid to be greatly our ſuperiors. It will be readily allowed, that the condition of a ſlave is not favourable to genius of any kind; and yet, the negro-ſlaves diſperſed over Europe, have often diſcovered ſymptoms of ingenuity, notwithſtanding their unhappy circumſtances. They become excellent handicraftſmen, and practical muſicians, and indeed learn

every thing their maſters are at pains to teach them, cruelty, perfidy, and debauchery not excepted. That a negro-ſlave, who can neither read nor write, nor ſpeak any European language, who is not permitted to do any thing but what his maſter commands, who has not a ſingle friend on earth, but is univerſally conſidered and treated as if he were of a ſpecies inferior to the human; — that ſuch a creature ſhould ſo diſtinguiſh himſelf among Europeans, as to be talked of through the world for a man of genius, is ſurely no reaſonable expectation. To ſuppoſe him of an inferior ſpecies, becauſe he does not thus diſtinguiſh himſelf, is juſt as rational, as to ſuppoſe any private European of an inferior ſpecies, becauſe he has not raiſed himſelf to the condition of royalty.

Had the Europeans been deſtitute of the arts of writing, and working in iron, they might have remained to this day as barbarous as the natives of Africa and America. Nor is the invention of theſe arts to be aſcribed to our ſuperior capacity. The genius of the inventor is not always to be eſtimated according to the importance of the invention. Gunpowder, and the mariner's

riner's compaſs, have produced wonderful revolutions in human affairs, and yet were accidental diſcoveries. Such probably were the firſt eſſays in writing, and working in iron. Suppoſe them the effects of contrivance; they were at leaſt contrived by a few individuals; and if they required a ſuperiority of underſtanding or of ſpecies in the inventors, thoſe inventors, and their deſcendents, are the only perſons who can lay claim to the honour of that ſuperiority.

That every practice and ſentiment is barbarous which is not according to the uſages of modern Europe, ſeems to be a fundamental maxim with many of our critics and philoſophers. Their remarks often put us in mind of the fable of the man and the lion. If negroes or Indians were diſpoſed to recriminate; if a Lucian or a Voltaire from the coaſt of Guinea, or from *the Five Nations*, were to pay us a viſit; what a picture of European manners might he preſent to his countrymen at his return! Nor would caricatura, or exaggeration, be neceſſary to render it hideous. A plain hiſtorical account of ſome of our moſt faſhionable duelliſts, gamblers, and adulte-

rers, (to name no more), would exhibit ſpecimens of brutiſh barbarity and ſottiſh infatuation, ſuch as might vie with any that ever appeared in Kamſchatka, California, or the land of Hottentots.

It is eaſy to ſee, with what views ſome modern authors throw out theſe hints to prove the natural inferiority of negroes. But let every friend to humanity pray, that they may be diſappointed. Britons are famous for generoſity; a virtue in which it is eaſy for them to excel both the Romans and the Greeks. Let it never be ſaid, that ſlavery is countenanced by a people the braveſt and moſt generous on earth, and who are animated with that heroic paſſion, the love of liberty, beyond all nations ancient or modern.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Conſequences of Metaphyſical Scepticiſm.

AFter all, it will perhaps be objected to this diſcourſe, that I have laid too much ſtreſs upon the conſequences of metaphyſical abſurdity, and repreſented them as much more dangerous than they are found to be in fact. I ſhall be told, that many of the controverſies in metaphyſic are merely verbal; and the errors proceeding from them of ſo abſtract a nature, that philoſophers run little riſk, and the vulgar no riſk at all, of being influenced by them in practice. It will be ſaid, that I never heard of any man who fell a ſacrifice to BERKELEY's ſyſtem, by breaking his neck over a material precipice, which he had taken for an ideal one; nor of any Fataliſt, whoſe morals were, upon the whole, more exceptionable than thoſe of the aſſerters of free agency: in a word, that whatever effect ſuch tenets may have upon the

the underſtanding, they ſeldom or never produce any ſenſible effects upon the heart. In conſidering this objection, I muſt confine myſelf to a few topics, for the ſubject to which it leads is of vaſt extent. The influence of the metaphyſical ſpirit upon art, ſcience, and manners, would furniſh matter for a large treatiſe. It will ſuffice at preſent to ſhow, that metaphyſical errors are not harmleſs, but may produce, and actually have produced, ſome very important and intereſting conſequences.

I begin with an obſervation often made, and indeed obvious enough, namely, That happineſs is the end of our being; and that knowledge, and even truth itſelf, are valuable only as they tend to promote it. Every uſeleſs ſtudy is a pernicious thing, becauſe it waſtes our time, and miſemploys our faculties. To prove that metaphyſical abſurdities do no good, would therefore ſufficiently juſtify the preſent undertaking. But it requires no profound ſagacity to be able to prove a great deal more.

We acknowledge, however, that all metaphyſical errors are not equally dangerous. There is an obſcurity in the abſtract ſciences,

ſciences, as they are commonly taught, which is often no bad preſervative againſt their influence. This obſcurity is ſometimes unavoidable, on account of the inſufficiency of language: ſometimes it is owing to the ſpiritleſs or ſlovenly ſtyle of the writer; and ſometimes it is affected; as when a philoſopher, from prudential conſiderations, thinks fit to diſguiſe any occaſional attack on the religion or laws of his country, by ſome artful equivocation, in the form of allegory, dialogue, or fable *.

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* Mr Hume is not unacquainted with this piece of policy. His apology for Atheiſm he delivers by the mouth of a *friend*, in the way of conference, prefaced with a declaration, that though he cannot by any means approve many of the ſentiments of that friend, yet he thinks they bear ſome relation to the chain of reaſoning carried on in his Inquiry concerning Human Nature. He had ſomething, it ſeems, to ſay againſt his Maker, which he modeſtly acknowledges to be curious, and worthy of attention, and which he thought, no doubt, to be mighty ſmart and clever. To call it what it really is, An attempt to vindicate Atheiſm, or what he probably thought it, A vindication of Atheiſm, ſeemed dangerous, and might diſguſt many of his well-meaning readers. He calls it, therefore, *An Eſſay on a Particular Providence and a Future State*, and puts his capital arguments in the mouth of another perſon: thus providing, by the ſame generous, candid, and manly expedient, a ſnare for the unwary reader, and an evaſion for himſelf. Perhaps it will

The ſtyle of *The Treatiſe of Human Nature* is ſo obſcure and unintereſting, that if the author had not in his *Eſſays* republiſhed the capital doctrines of that work in a more elegant and ſprightly manner, a confutation of them would have been altogether unneceſſary. And, after all, though this author is one of the deadlieſt, he is not perhaps one of the moſt dangerous enemies of religion. Bolingbroke, his inferior in ſubtlety, but far ſuperior in wit, eloquence, and knowledge of mankind, is more dangerous, becauſe more entertaining. So that though the reader may be diſpoſed to applaud the patriotiſm of the grand jury of Weſtminſter, who preſented the poſthumous works of that Noble Lord as a public nuiſance, he muſt be ſenſible, that there was no neceſſity for affixing any ſuch ſtigma to the philoſophical writings of the Scottiſh author. And yet, it cannot be denied, that even theſe,

will be aſked, what I mean by the word *Atheiſt?* I anſwer, A reaſonable creature, who diſbelieves the being of God, or thinks it inconſiſtent with ſound reaſon, to believe, that the Great Firſt Cauſe is perfect in holineſs, power, wiſdom, juſtice, and beneficence, — is a ſpeculative Atheiſt; and he who endeavours to inſtil the ſame unbelief into others, is a practical Atheiſt.

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notwithſtanding their obſcurity, have done miſchief enough to make every ſober-minded perſon earneſtly wiſh, that they had never exiſted.

Further, ſome metaphyſical errors are ſo groſsly abſurd, that there is hardly a poſſibility of their perverting our conduct. Such, conſidered in itſelf, is the doctrine of the non-exiſtence of matter; which no man in his ſenſes was ever capable of believing for a ſingle moment. Pyrrho was a vain hypocrite: he took it into his head to ſay, that he believed nothing, becauſe he wanted to be taken notice of: he affected, too, to act up to this pretended diſbelief; and would not of his own accord ſtep aſide to avoid a dog, a chariot, or a precipice: but he always took care to have ſome friends or ſervants at hand, whoſe buſineſs it was to keep the philoſopher out of harm's way.—That the univerſe is nothing but a *heap* of impreſſions and ideas unperceived by any ſubſtance, is another of thoſe profound myſteries, from which we need not apprehend much danger; becauſe it is ſo perfectly abſurd, that no words, but ſuch as imply a contradiction, will expreſs it. I know not

whether the abſurdity of a ſyſtem was ever before urged as an apology for its author. But it is better to be abſurd than miſchievous: and happy it were for the world, and much to the credit of ſome perſons now in it, if metaphyſicians were chargeable with nothing worſe than abſurdity.

Again, certain errors in our theories of human nature, conſidered in themſelves, are in ſome meaſure harmleſs, when the principles that oppoſe their influence are ſtrong and active. A gentle diſpoſition, confirmed habits of virtue, obedience to law, a regard to order, or even the fear of puniſhment, often prove antidotes to metaphyſical poiſon. When Fatality hath theſe principles to combat, it may puzzle the judgement, but will not corrupt the heart. Natural inſtinct never fails to oppoſe it; all men believe themſelves free agents, as long at leaſt as they keep clear of metaphyſic; nay, ſo powerful is the ſentiment of moral liberty, that I cannot think it was ever entirely ſubdued in any rational being. But if it were ſubdued, (and ſurely no Fataliſt will acknowledge it invincible); if the oppoſite principles ſhould at the ſame time ceaſe to act; and

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if debauchery, bad example, and licentious writings, ſhould extinguiſh or weaken the ſenſe of duty; what might not be apprehended from men who are above law, or can ſcreen themſelves from puniſhment? What virtue is to be expected from a being who believes itſelf a mere machine? If I were perſuaded, that the evil I commit is impoſed upon me by fatal neceſſity, I ſhould think repentance as abſurd as Xerxes ſcourging the waves of the Helleſpont; and be as little diſpoſed to form reſolutions of amendment, as to contrive ſchemes for preventing the frequent eclipſes of the ſatellites of Jupiter. Every author who publiſhes an eſſay in behalf of Fatality, is willing to run the riſk of bringing all men over to his opinion. What if this ſhould be the conſequence? If it be poſſible to make one reaſonable creature a Fataliſt, may it not be poſſible to make many ſuch? And would this be a matter of little or no moment? It is demonſtrable that it would not. But we have already explained ourſelves on this head.

Other metaphyſical errors there are, which, though they do not ſtrike more di-

rectly at the foundations of virtue, are more apt to influence mankind, becauſe they are not ſo vigorouſly counteracted by any particular propenſity. What ſhall we ſay to the theory of HOBBES, who makes the diſtinction between vice and virtue to be wholly artificial, without any foundation in the divine will, or human conſtitution, and depending entirely on the will of governors? According to this account, no action that is commanded by a king can be vitious, and none virtuous except warranted by that authority. Were this opinion univerſal, what could deter men from ſecret wickedneſs, or ſuch as is not cogniſable by law? What could reſtrain governors from the utmoſt inſolence of tyranny? What but a miracle could ſave the human race from perdition?

In the preface to one of Mr HUME's late publications, we are preſented with an elaborate panegyric on the author. "He hath exerted," ſays the writer of the preface, "thoſe great talents he received "from Nature, and the acquiſitions he "made by ſtudy, in the ſearch of truth, "and in promoting the good of man-"kind." A noble encomium indeed! If

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in be a true one, what are we to think of a Douglas, a Campbell, a Gerard, a Reid, and ſome others, who have attacked many of Mr HUME's opinions, and proved them to be contrary to truth, and ſubverſive of the good of mankind? I thought indeed, that the works of thoſe excellent writers had given great ſatisfaction to the friends of truth and virtue, and done an important ſervice to ſociety: but, if I believe this prefacer*, I muſt look on them, as well as on this attempt of my own, with deteſtation and horror. But before ſo

* I have been told, that the preface to Mr HUME's account of his diſpute with Rouſſeau was not written by Mr HUME himſelf, but by ſome perſon in France. I am very willing to believe this; but I cannot account for his having ſo long neglected to contradict publicly an unfair repreſentation contained in that preface, from which ſome, who were ignorant of the true ſtate of the caſe, have formed ſtrange conjectures. "His love of peace," ſays the prefacer, "is ſo well known, that the criticiſms "written againſt his pieces have been *often* brought to "him by their reſpective authors, for him to reviſe and "correct them." In juſtice to theſe authors, I think it my duty to inform the public, that ſome of the pieces written againſt Mr HUME's philoſophy were ſhown to him before publication, not for the reaſon here given, but becauſe the authors wanted to know from himſelf, whether they had in any place miſtaken his meaning. He

ſo great a change in my ſentiments can take place, it will be neceſſary, that Mr HUME prove, to my ſatisfaction, that he is neither the author nor the publiſher of the *Eſſays* that bear his name, nor of the *Treatiſe of Human Nature*. For I will not take it on his, nor on any man's word, that religion, both revealed and natural, and all conviction in regard to truth, are detrimental to mankind. And it is moſt certain, that he, if he is indeed the author of thoſe Eſſays, and of that Treatiſe, hath exerted his great talents, and employed ſeveral years of his life, in endeavouring to perſuade the world, that the fundamental doctrines of natural religion are irrational, the proofs of revealed religion ſuch as ought not to ſatisfy an impartial mind, and that there is not in any ſcience an evidence of truth ſufficient to produce certainty. Suppoſe theſe opinions eſtabliſhed in the world, and ſay, if you can,

He pays himſelf too great a compliment, and claims a merit with the public to which he has no title, if he believes, and would have the world to believe, that their deſign was to get their compoſitions corrected by him. Some of them, to my certain knowledge, had nothing leſs in view.

that

that the good of mankind would be promoted by them. To me it ſeems impoſſible for ſociety to exiſt under the influence of ſuch opinions. Nor let it be thought, that we give an unfavourable view of human nature, when we inſiſt on the neceſſity of good principles for the preſervation of good order. Such a total ſubverſion of human ſentiment is, I believe, impoſſible: mankind, at their very worſt, are not ſuch monſters as to admit it; reaſon, conſcience, taſte, habit, intereſt, fear, muſt perpetually oppoſe it: but the philoſophy that aims at a total ſubverſion of human ſentiment is not on that account the leſs deteſtable. And yet it is ſaid of the authors of this philoſophy, that they exert their great talents in promoting the good of mankind. What an inſult on human nature and common ſenſe! If mankind are tame enough to acquieſce in ſuch an inſult, and ſervile enough to reply, "It is true, we "have been much obliged to the celebra-"ted ſceptics of this moſt enlightened age," —they would almoſt tempt one to expreſs himſelf in the ſtyle of miſanthropy, and ſay, "Si populus vult decipi, deci-"piatur."

Every

Every doctrine is dangerous that tends to diſcredit the evidence of our ſenſes, external or internal, and to ſubvert the original inſtinctive principles of human belief. In this reſpect the moſt unnatural and incomprehenſible abſurdities, ſuch as the doctrine of the non-exiſtence of matter, and of perceptions without a percipient, are far from being harmleſs; as they ſeem to lead, and actually have led, to univerſal ſcepticiſm; and ſet an example of a method of reaſoning ſufficient to overturn all truth, and pervert every human faculty. In this reſpect alſo we have proved the doctrine of Fatality to be of moſt pernicious tendency, as it leads men to ſuppoſe their moral ſentiments fallacious or equivocal; not to mention its influence on our notions of God, and natural religion. When a ſceptic attacks one principle of common ſenſe, he doth in effect attack all; for if we are made diſtruſtful of the veracity of inſtinctive conviction in one inſtance, we muſt, or at leaſt we may, become equally diſtruſtful in every other. A little ſcepticiſm introduced into ſcience will ſoon aſſimilate the whole to its own nature; the fatal fermentation,

mentation, once begun, ſpreads wider and wider every moment, till all the maſs be transformed into rottenneſs and poiſon.

There is no exaggeration here. The preſent ſtate of the abſtract ſciences is a melancholy proof, that what I ſay is true. This is called the age of reaſon and philoſophy; and this is the age of avowed and dogmatical atheiſm. Sceptics have at laſt grown weary of doubting; and have now diſcovered, by the force of their great talents, that one thing at leaſt is certain, namely, that God, and religion, and immortality, are empty ſounds. This is the final triumph of our ſo much boaſted philoſophic ſpirit; theſe are the limits of the dominion of error, beyond which we can hardly conceive it poſſible for human ſophiſtry to penetrate. Exult, O Metaphyſic, at the conſummation of thy glories. More thou canſt not hope, more thou canſt not deſire. Fall down, ye mortals, and acknowledge the ſtupendous bleſſing: adore thoſe men of great talents, thoſe daring ſpirits, thoſe patterns of modeſty, gentleneſs, and candour, thoſe prodigies of genius, thoſe heroes in bene-

ficence, who have thus laboured — to ſtrip you of every rational conſolation, and to make your condition ten thouſand times worſe than that of the beaſts that periſh.

Why can I not expreſs myſelf with leſs warmth! Why can I not deviſe an apology for theſe philoſophers, to ſcreen them from this dreadful imputation of being the enemies and plagues of mankind! — Perhaps they do not themſelves believe their own tenets, but publiſh them only as the means of getting a name and a fortune. But I hope this is not the caſe; God forbid that it ſhould! for then the enormity of their guilt would ſurpaſs all power of language; we could only gaze at it, and tremble. Compared with ſuch wickedneſs, the crimes of the thief, the robber, the incendiary, would almoſt diſappear. Theſe ſacrifice the fortunes or the lives of ſome of their fellow-creatures, to their own neceſſity or outrageous appetite: but thoſe would run the hazard of ſacrificing, to their own avarice or vanity, the happineſs of all mankind, both here and hereafter. No; I cannot ſuppoſe it: the heart of man, however

however depraved, is not capable of ſuch infernal malignity.——Perhaps they do not foreſee the conſequences of their doctrines. BERKELEY moſt certainly did not. — But BERKELEY did not attack the religion of his country, did not ſeek to undermine the foundations of virtue, did not preach or recommend Atheiſm. He erred; and who is free from error? but his intentions were irreproachable; and his conduct as a man, and a Chriſtian, did honour to human nature.—— Perhaps our modern ſceptics are ignorant, that, without the belief of a God, and the hope of immortality, the miſeries of human life would often be inſupportable. But can I ſuppoſe them in a ſtate of total and invincible ſtupidity, utter ſtrangers to the human heart, and to human affairs! Sure they would not thank me for ſuch a ſuppoſition. Yet this I muſt ſuppoſe, or I muſt believe them to be the moſt cruel, the moſt perfidious, and the moſt profligate of men.

Careſſed by thoſe who call themſelves the great, ingroſſed by the formalities of life, intoxicated with vanity, pampered

with adulation, diſſipated in the tumult of buſineſs, or amidſt the viciſſitudes of folly, they perhaps have little need and little reliſh for the conſolations of religion. But let them know, that in the ſolitary ſcenes of life, there is many an honeſt and tender heart pining with incurable anguiſh, pierced with the ſharpeſt ſting of diſappointment, bereft of friends, chilled with poverty, racked with diſeaſe, ſcourged by the oppreſſor; whom nothing but truſt in Providence, and the hope of a future retribution, could preſerve from the agonies of deſpair. And do they, with ſacrilegious hands, attempt to violate this laſt refuge of the miſerable, and to rob them of the only comfort that had ſurvived the ravages of misfortune, malice, and tyranny! Did it ever happen, that the influence of their execrable tenets diſturbed the tranquillity of virtuous retirement, deepened the gloom of human diſtreſs, or aggravated the horrors of the grave? Is it poſſible, that this may have happened in many inſtances? Is it probable, that this hath happened, or may happen, in one ſingle inſtance? —— Ye traitors to human

mankind, ye murderers of the human ſoul, how can ye anſwer for it to your own hearts! Surely every ſpark of your generoſity is extinguiſhed for ever, if this conſideration do not awaken in you the keeneſt remorſe, and make you wiſh in bitterneſs of ſoul.——But I remonſtrate in vain. All this muſt have often occurred to you, and been as often rejected as utterly frivolous. Could I inforce the preſent topic by an appeal to your vanity, I might poſſibly make ſome impreſſion: but to plead with you on the principles of benevolence or generoſity, is to addreſs you in a language ye do not, or will not, underſtand; and as to the ſhame of being convicted of abſurdity, ignorance, or want of candour, ye have long ago proved yourſelves ſuperior to the ſenſe of it.

But let not the lovers of truth be diſcouraged. Atheiſm cannot be of long continuance, nor is there much danger of its becoming univerſal. The influence of ſome conſpicuous characters hath brought it too much into faſhion; which, in a thoughtleſs and profligate age, it is no difficult matter to accompliſh. But when men have

have retrieved the powers of ſerious reflection, they will find it a frightful phantom; and the mind will return gladly and eagerly to its old endearments. One thing we certainly know; the faſhion of ſceptical and metaphyſical ſyſtems paſſeth ſpeedily away. Thoſe unnatural productions, the vile effuſion of a hard and ſtupid heart, that miſtakes its own reſtleſsneſs for the activity of genius, and its own captiouſneſs for ſagacity of underſtanding, may, like other monſters, pleaſe a while by their ſingularity; but the charm is ſoon over; and the ſucceeding age will be aſtoniſhed to hear, that their forefathers were deluded, or amuſed, with ſuch fooleries. The meaſure of ſcepticiſm ſeems indeed to be full; it is time for truth to vindicate its rights, and we truſt they ſhall yet be completely vindicated. Such are the hopes and the earneſt wiſhes of one, who hath ſeldom made controverſy his ſtudy, who never took pleaſure in argumentation, and who utterly diſclaims all ambition of being reputed a ſubtle diſputant; but who, as a friend to human nature, would account

it

it his honour to be instrumental in promoting, though by means unpleasant to himself, the cause of virtue and true science, and in bringing to contempt that sceptical sophistry which is equally subversive of both.

THE END.

ERRATA.

Page 55. *lin.* 1. *read apagogical,*
107. *lin. ult. note, read* Part 3. chap. 2.
171. *lin. ult. read our belief*
200. *lin.* 16. *read* of putting
330. *lin.* 21. *read* each of which
381. *lin.* 9. *read* it cannot be, true,

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